

GUN BLAZE WEST

ガン・ブレイズ・ウエスト



2 SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
Story & Art by
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



I rode on a horse. It was the first time ever, but somehow, it was awesome. Clippety-clop, clippety-clop for about two hours. I stared up at the vast sky, thought about what lay beyond the horizon, dodged a spray of urine from the horse in front—everything was a precious experience.

When it was all said and done, I couldn't make use of my trip in this story, but I know that this experience will surely come in handy someday. Let's head out again. Yup.

—NOBUHIRO WATSUKI, 2001

Nobuhiro Watsuki earned international accolades for his first major manga series, *Rurouni Kenshin*, about a wandering swordsman in Meiji Era Japan. Serialized in Japan's *Weekly Shonen Jump* from 1994 to 1999, *Rurouni Kenshin* quickly became a worldwide sensation, inspiring a spin-off short story ("Yahiko no Sakabato"), an animated TV series, and several animated movies. Watsuki's latest series, *Buso Renkin*, also available in English from VIZ Media, began publication in *Weekly Shonen Jump* in June 2003.

GUN BLAZE WEST VOL.2

The SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY
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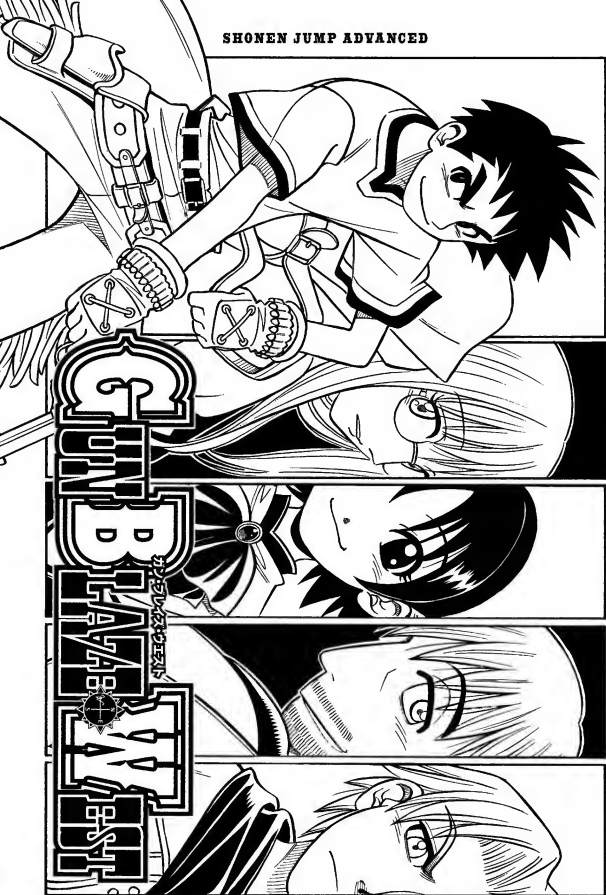


PARENTAL ADVISORY

GUN BLAZE WEST is rated T+ for Older Teen
and is recommended for ages 16 and up.

This volume contains violence.

ratings.viz.com



STORY & ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

TARGET KEVIN



CAROL JOHNSTON



WILL JOHNSTON



ROBERT RODRIGEZ



COLICE SATOH
(KORISU SATO)



America in the 19th century. Viu, a young boy who dreams of becoming a gunslinger, lives in Winston Town, Illinois, with his older sister Cissy. One day, Viu meets Marcus Homer, a gunslinger who scurried away from the West. With Marcus's help, Viu stands up against two outlaws and manages to apprehend them despite getting badly beaten up. When Viu tells Marcus, "I want to become stronger," Marcus makes up his mind to resume his quest for "Gun Blaze West," a promised land he once dreamt of—a place where only the strong who are confident of their skills are allowed to set foot. The two vow to join together and head toward their goal. When it is learned that the outlaws were scouts for the heinous Kenbrown Gang, the town prepares for attack. A volunteer defense force guards the west trail where they anticipate the gang will pass through... When Viu and Marcus approach the guard outpost during their training, Kenbrown's gang attacks. Marcus restrains Viu from charging in and then takes a desperate risk, challenging the leader, Kenbrown, to a man-to-man duel. Marcus, however, falls to a bullet from the cowardly Kenbrown's gun. Marcus entrusts his gun to Viu, who takes on the gang without giving an inch, finally managing to gun down Kenbrown.

Five years later, Viu, now 14, heads west. He starts by visiting the city of St. Louis, the "Gateway to the West." Viu is invited into a shabby saloon by a young girl named Carol but is harassed by a bouncer named Kevin from the Bella Donna saloon across the street. Carol's older brother Will shows up just as a fight is about to start inside the saloon and restrains Viu and Kevin with his magnificent rope technique. The situation calms when Carlo, the owner of Bella Donna, makes his appearance. Viu stays the night at Will's place, where he learns that Will too seeks Gun Blaze West. But that night, Kevin sets fire to Will's house...

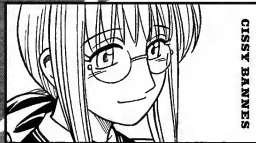
VIU BANNES
(at age 9)



MARCUS HOMER



CISSY BANNES



VIU BANNES
(at present)





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CHAPTER 8: STANCE

REWARD

\$????

DEAD or ALIVE



VIU BANNES



I DON'T KNOW IF
YOU'RE JUST
ACTING TOUGH
OR SHOWING
OFF, BUT YOUR
INSISTENCE ON
USING A ROPE...



PISSES ME
OFF! IT BUGS
THE CRAP
OUT OF ME!!

COME ON
OUT, WILL
JOHN-
STON!!



CRACK

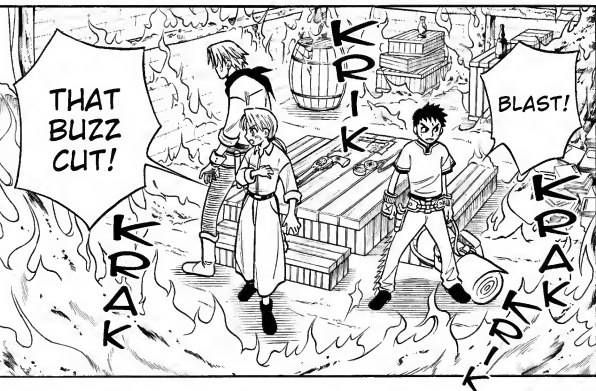
WHICH IS
BETTER,
MY GUN
OR YOUR
LASSO?!

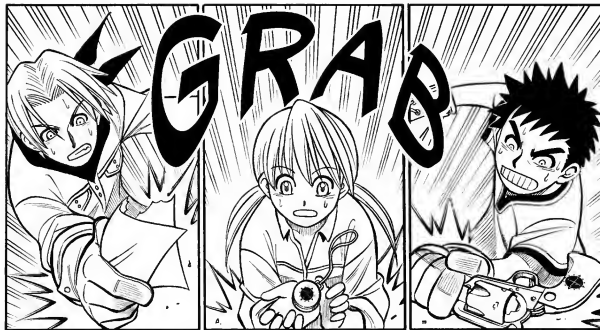
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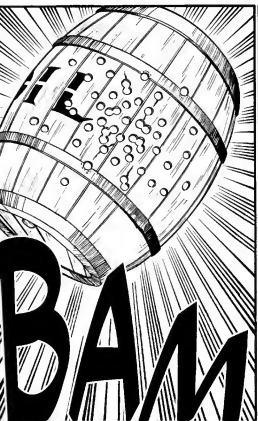
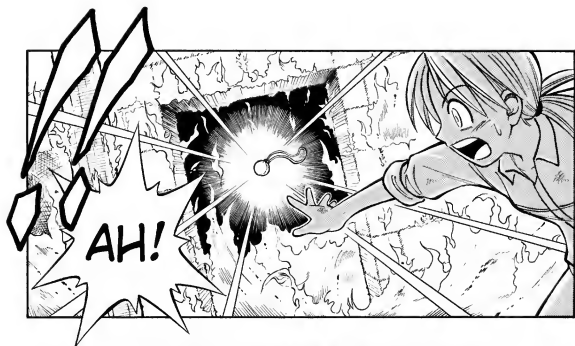
LET'S
SETTLE
ONCE AND
FOR ALL
WHO'S THE
STRON-
GEST!!

CRACKIE











ROUND
TWO....!!



DANG
CREEPY-
EYED--!

CAROL!!



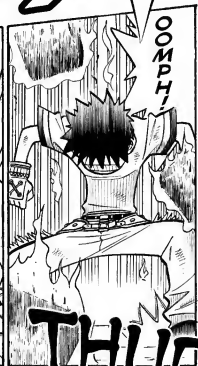
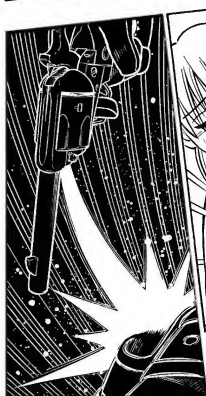
RROARR

CAN'T EVEN
SEE THE
WALLS OR
DOORS
ANYMORE!

GRASS
SHANTIES
SURE DO
BURN!

AH-HA!

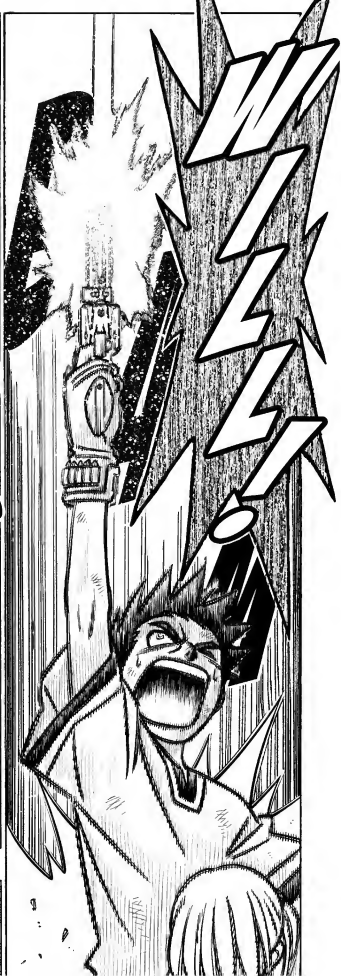




THUD



THERE
!!

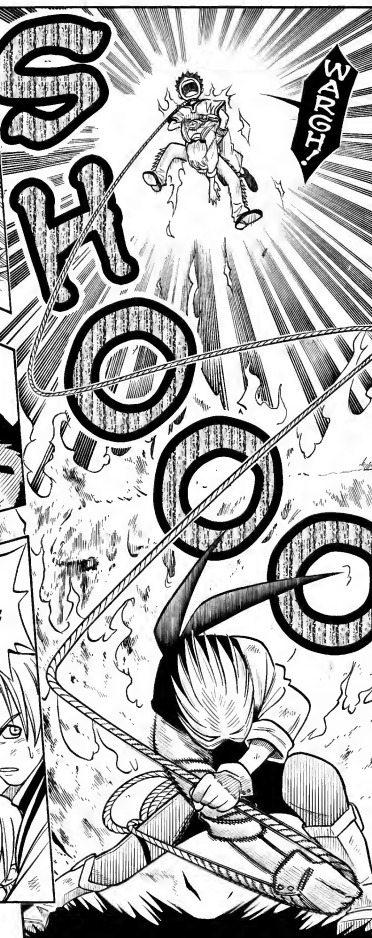


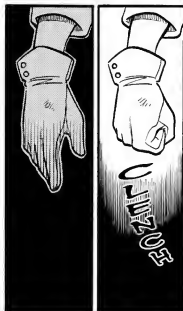
300000!



GOOD
FOR YOU,
BIG GUY!

YOU SAVED
YOUR PRECIOUS
LITTLE SISTER
FROM GETTING
BARBECUED!!





THAT DARN CARLO IS GOING TO GET ON MY CASE IF I DO MUCH MORE HERE.

COME TO THE BELLA DONNA! I'LL BE WAITING!!



DON'T RUN AWAY!

WAIT, YOU SON OF A--!



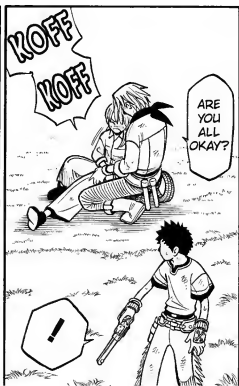
AND LOOK, I GOT THE COMPASS, TOO...

YES, I'LL MANAGE.



THAT'S JUST A CASE! IF I HAD TO, I'D GIVE IT UP SEVERAL TIMES OVER.

YOU FOOL!



KOFF
KOFF

ARE YOU ALL OKAY?

...YOUR PRIZED
POSSESSION.
RIGHT,
BROTHER?

I'M SORRY.
BUT
THIS IS...

...AND PROMISED YOU
THAT WHEN YOU GOT
BIGGER, YOU AND HE
WOULD SEARCH FOR
GUN BLAZE WEST
TOGETHER.

WHEN YOU
FIGURED OUT HOW
THE TRICK NEEDLE
WORKED, FATHER
GAVE IT TO YOU
AS A GIFT...

...YOU'VE NEVER
LET GO OF IT
FOR A MOMENT.

EVER SINCE
THEN...

OKAY.
I WILL.

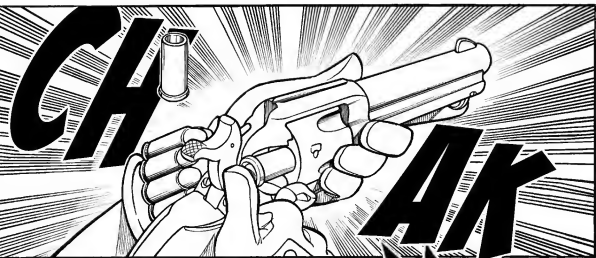
I
UNDERSTAND.
REST
A WHILE
LONGER.

...ALL
RIGHT.

VII...

...THANK
YOU.





...I'M
BRING-
ING
HIM
DOWN
!!

THAT
BUZZ-HEAD.
CREEPY-
EYED...



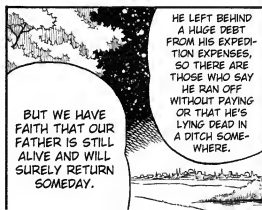
WILL!



AFTER YOU
HAVE
A DOCTOR
LOOK AT
CAROL,
WE'RE
CHARGING
IN!

LET'S
GO,
WILL!





EVEN IF IT MEANS
LIVING IN A GRASS
SHACK AND BARELY
PAYING OUR DEBTS,
WE CAN'T LEAVE
HERE!

CAROL FEELS
ESPECIALLY
STRONGLY ABOUT
THAT! THAT'S WHY
WE CAN'T LEAVE
ST. LOUIS!

BUT WHAT
ABOUT
CAROL?
CAROL CAN'T
FIGHT, YOU
KNOW!!

IF I *WERE* TO FIGHT KEVIN
NOW, THE BELLA DONNA
WOULD GET INVOLVED, AND
THE SITUATION WOULD TURN
INTO A QUAGMIRE! I COULD
STILL FIGHT, AND I CAN
ALWAYS MANAGE!

...BUT
I PROTECT
RATHER
THAN
FIGHT!

YOU'D
PROBABLY
CHOOSE TO
FIGHT AND
"BRING HIM
DOWN"...



H
F
F

H
F
F

I UNDER-
STAND.

...I
SEE.

WHAT
?!

THEN
...
...I'LL
TAKE THIS
FIGHT
ALONE IN
YOUR
PLACE.





I'LL
BRING HIM
AND THE
BELLA
DONNA
DOWN
AT THE
SAME
TIME!!

DON'T
WORRY.

I'LL SEE
TO IT THAT
HE NEVER
PICKS
A FIGHT
WITH YOU
AGAIN.

YOU SAY THAT
BECAUSE YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT SORT OF
PLACE THE BELLA
DONNA IS!



YOU
REALLY
ARE
A FOOL!

CARLO PAYS MONEY
UNDER THE TABLE TO
CROOKED COUNCILMEN
AND THE SHERIFF, SO
HE CAN COVER UP
ANYTHING AS LONG AS
IT HAPPENS INSIDE
BELLA DONNA!!



BELLA DONNA
SALOON

KILLING IS
ACCEPTABLE,
ANYTHING GOES.
IT'S THE MOST
DANGEROUS
PLACE IN ST.
LOUIS!



...YOU'LL
REALLY GET
YOURSELF
KILLED!!

IF YOU TAKE
ON ST. LOUIS'S
CRAZIEST AT
A PLACE LIKE
THAT...



...IS SAID TO
BE A PLACE
WHERE ONLY THE
STRONG WHO HAVE
CONFIDENCE IN
THEIR SKILLS ARE
ALLOWED TO
STEP FOOT.

IF
I RECALL
...

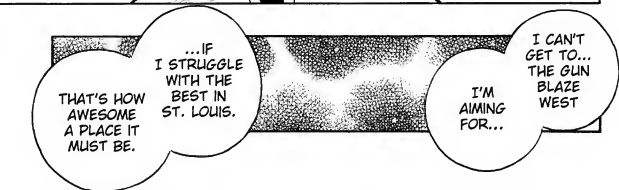
...GUN BLAZE
WEST, WHICH
IS LEGENDARY
AMONG THE
GUNSLINGERS
OF THE
WEST...



THAT'S WHY
I LEFT MY
HOMETOWN
AND SET
OUT FOR
GUN BLAZE
WEST.

I WANT TO
FIND OUT
HOW
STRONG
I AM...

...AND HOW
STRONG
I CAN
BECOME.

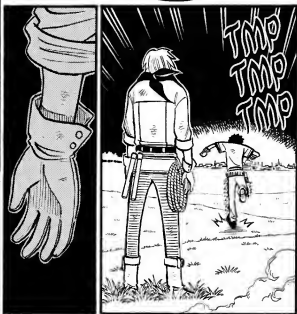


THAT'S HOW
AWESOME
A PLACE IT
MUST BE.

...IF
I STRUGGLE
WITH THE
BEST IN
ST. LOUIS.

I'M
AIMING
FOR...

I CAN'T
GET TO...
THE GUN
BLAZE
WEST





AND SO, DESPITE SOME DISAPPROVING LOOKS FROM THOSE INVOLVED, HERE IS THE USUAL COMICS BONUS CORNER, PRESENTED WITH A FEW CHANGES IN FORMAT.

IN THIS BOOK, I GAVE TOP PRIORITY TO "THIS IS THE SORT OF CHARACTER I WANT TO DRAW!" AND ELIMINATED WHAT I WOULD CALL MOTIFS TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, TRYING HARD TO KEEP IT LIMITED TO AN "IMAGE ZONE." AS FOR WHETHER OR NOT THAT ATTEMPT WENT WELL, LOOKING AT THE RESULTS, QUITE FRANKLY, I FEEL IT WENT PRETTY BADLY.

FROM HERE ON, WITH APOLOGIES, I'D LIKE TO COMPRISE THIS CORNER OF THREE MAIN ASPECTS: CONCEPT, IMAGE ZONE AND DESIGN.

FIRST, THE MAIN CHARACTER: VIU BANNES.

CONCEPT: VIU CAME ABOUT FROM MY STRONG WISH TO DO A SHONEN-TYPE MAIN CHARACTER.

CHARACTER FILE #01

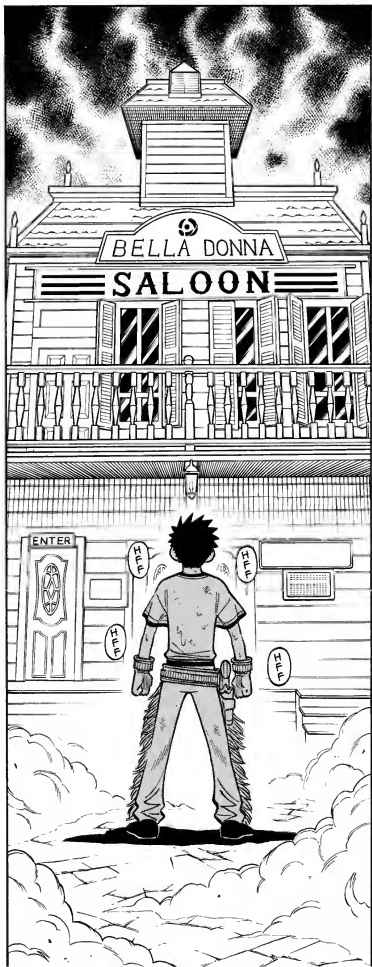


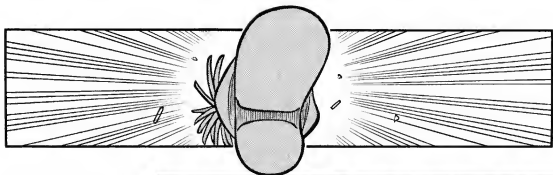
VIU BANNES

HOWEVER, I STRUGGLED MIGHTILY BECAUSE IT APPEARED THAT MY SENSIBILITIES WERE WAY OFF FOR A SHONEN TITLE. (WHEN YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT IT, MY PREVIOUS WORK, *RUIROUNI KENSHIN*, WAS WAY OFF WITH A THIRTY-ISH MAIN CHARACTER, KENSHIN, WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN MARRIED.) AS I SQUIRMED MY WAY THROUGH THAT SERIES, I WAS FORCED TO JUMP INTO THE NEXT SERIES WITH HARDLY ANY PREPARATION BECAUSE THE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT SERIAL HAD ALREADY BEEN SET. (I TOUCH ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE EPILOGUE OF THE NEXT AND FINAL VOLUME. WITHOUT DOING SO, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO WRAP UP *GUN BLAZE WEST*.) AFTER THAT, I FOUND MYSELF JUST FRANTICALLY FILLING UP PAGES WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT I WAS DOING. QUITE FRANKLY, IN THE END, THE STORY CONCLUDED WITH ME HAVING LOST SIGHT OF VIU'S CHARACTER TO THE VERY END. IT WAS EXTREMELY UNFORTUNATE.

I HOPE TO ONE DAY REVIVE THE CHARACTER, GIVING SERIOUS THOUGHT TO VIU BANNES AND WHAT I WANTED TO DO THROUGH HIS CHARACTER AND WHAT IT IS I WANTED TO DRAW.

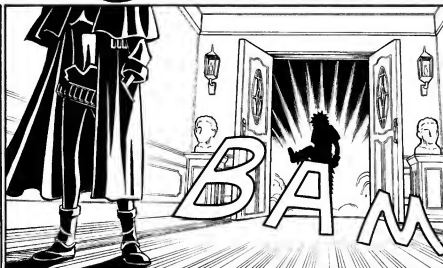
**CHAPTER 9:
DEADLY
TARGET**





HE'S
HERE...

HMPH...



I'M
HERE!

THAT'S
RIGHT.



...WHO
KNOWS?



THE HECK
WITH YOUR
NAME!

VILU BANNES.

WHAT
THE--?!
WHO THE
HECK ARE
YOU?!

WHERE'S
WILL
JOHNSTON?!

AH--HEM!



BUT IF HE'S
EVEN JUST
A BIT OF
A FOOL...

IF HE'S
REALLY A
SMART GUY,
HE PROBABLY
WON'T COME.



NOW WAIT...

WHAT
?!

I'LL BRING
YOU AND
THE BELLA
DONNA
DOWN!

WHATEVER!
I'M TAKING ON
THE FIGHT YOU
PICKED WITH
HIM IN HIS
PLACE!



OUR GUESTS
ARE GETTING
BORED.

IT SHOULD
AT LEAST
SERVE AS
A WARM-UP
ACT.

HUH?!

THE BELLA
DONNA, TOO?
NOW THAT'S
SOMETHING I
CAN'T IGNORE.

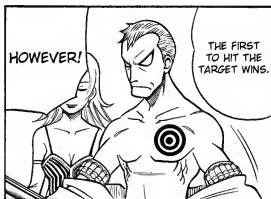
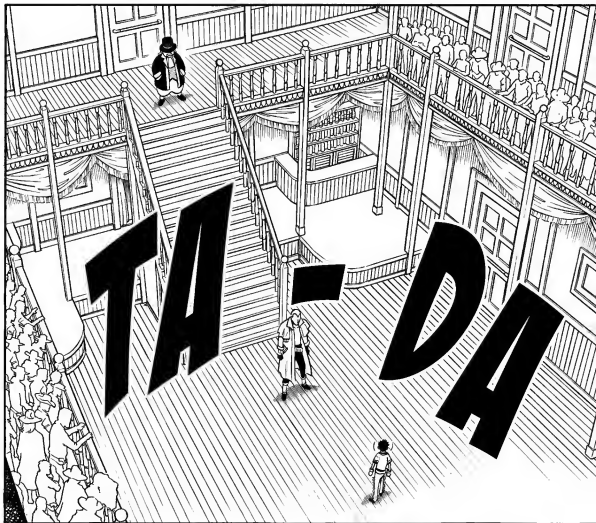
KEVIN,
TAKE HIM
ON.



OUR BELLA
DONNA RULES,
"DEADLY
TARGET."

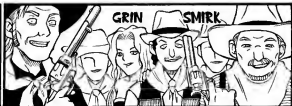
...NOW THAT
YOU'VE
ENTERED THIS
PLACE, YOU'LL
PLAY BY OUR
RULES.

COME WITH
ME, KID.
BUT...



AS A PENALTY,
THE LOSER WILL
BECOME THE TARGET
OF OUR GUESTS,
WHO ARE WAITING
QUITE ANXIOUSLY
UPSTAIRS.

IN THE EVENT
A DUELER HITS A PART
OF THE OPPONENT'S
BODY OTHER THAN THE
TARGET, THAT PERSON
IMMEDIATELY BECOMES
THE LOSER.



WHAT A HUGE
DIFFERENCE
FROM THE
OTHER SALOON
KEEPER'S
PLACE.

A PRETTY
UNLIKELY
BUNCH.

YOU'RE THE
WARM-UP ACT
AND A KID,
SO NO ONE'S
EXPECTING AS
COOL A TARGET
AS MINE.

I DON'T
MIND AT ALL
IF YOU GET
SCARED AND
DRAW A TINY
ONE ON YOUR
ARM OR LEG.

THINK V-E-R-Y
CAREFULLY
BEFORE
DRAWING IT,
OR ELSE YOU'LL
REALLY END
UP GOING TO
THE OTHER
WORLD.

UH-Z

OKAY KID,
DRAW
YOUR
TARGET!

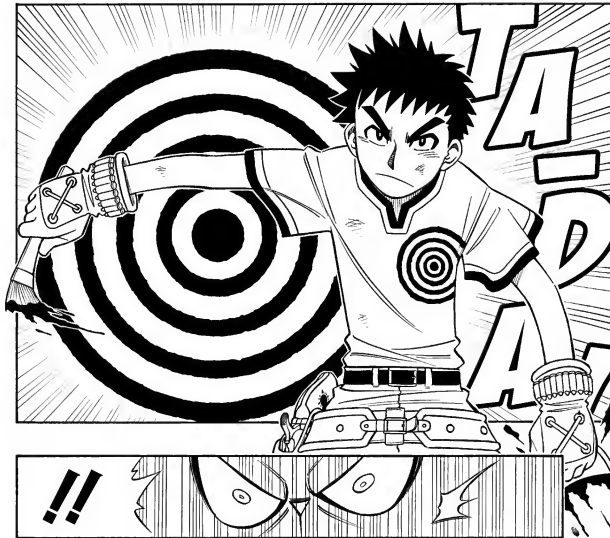
THAT'S
IT FOR
THE
DETAILS!

WE'VE READIED
ALL THE GUNS
YOU NEED
UNDER THE
COUNTERS.

YOU'RE
FREE TO
USE ANY GUN
YOU WISH,
EVEN ONE
THAT IS
NOT YOUR
"SPECIALTY."

FEEL
FREE TO
CHANGE
GUNS
DURING
THE
FIGHT.

* SPECIALTY-THE WEAPON ONE IS HANDIEST WITH



!!

AND WITH
A BIGGER,
FIVE-RING
BULL'S-EYE!



OVER THE
HEART,
JUST LIKE
"TARGET
KEVIN."

...WILL
NOT...

I...

I'M NOT
"RISKING
MY LIFE"
FOR SOME
SILLY
AMUSEMENT.

DON'T
BE
STUPID.

WHOA?
BULL'S-EYE!

...TAKE
A DIRECT
HIT!

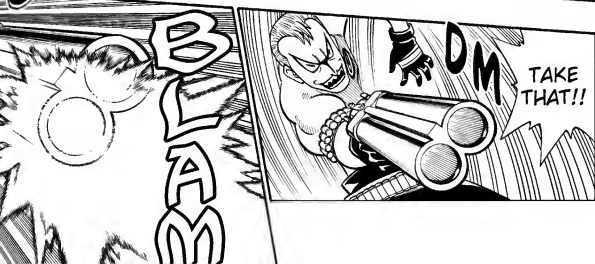
...RISKING
YOUR LIFE,
HUH?
YOU'VE
GOT GUTS.

I'VE WON 13
STRAIGHT
UNDER THESE
RULES.

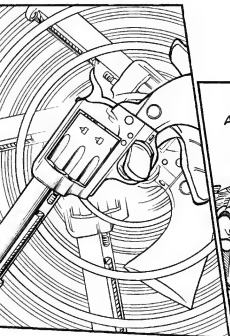
INTER-
ESTING!

I'LL SHOW
YOU JUST
HOW STRONG
"TARGET KEVIN"
IS!

FIGHT!







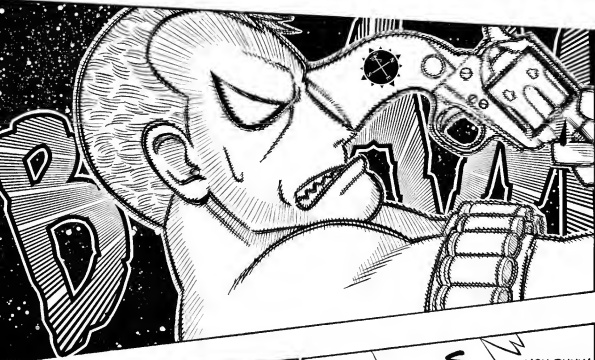
WHAT THE HECK
ARE YOU THINKING?!
USE YOUR GUN
LIKE YOU'RE
SUPPOSED TO!



STOP



PTOO



I DON'T
NEED TO
SHOOT
YOU.
POUNDING
YOU IS
GOOD
ENOUGH!

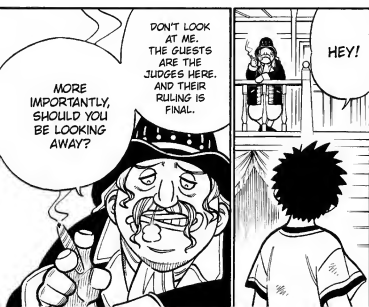
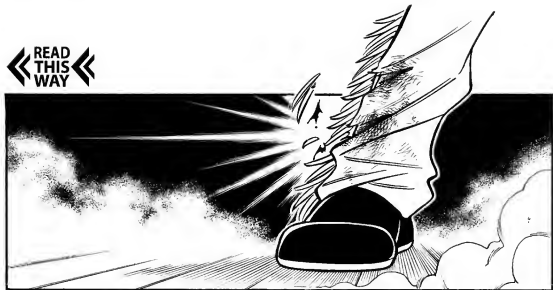
YOU'RE TOO
SLOW AND
TOTALLY
OFF-GUARD!

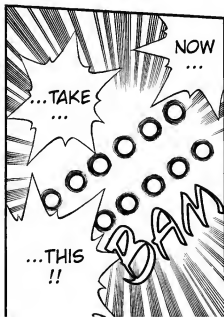
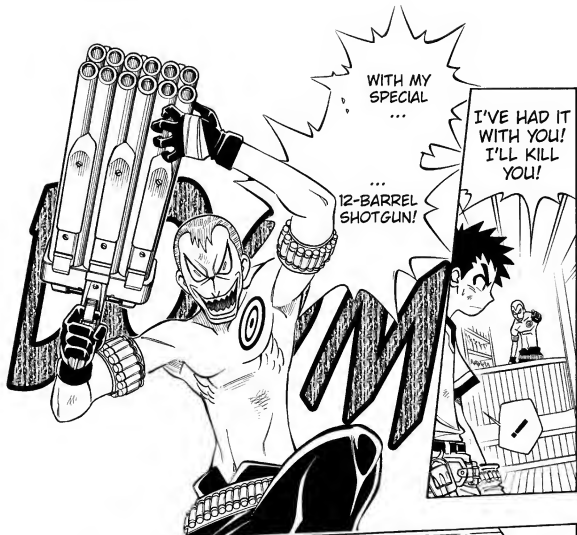
YOU
TALK TOO
MUCH!

MAJOR T

YOU PUNK!
ARE YOU
JUST
SCREWING
AROUND
WITH ME?!









SHUT UP.
WHAT DO
YOU
MEAN,
"THE
END"?



NOTHING
LEFT OF
HIM!!

THE
END!



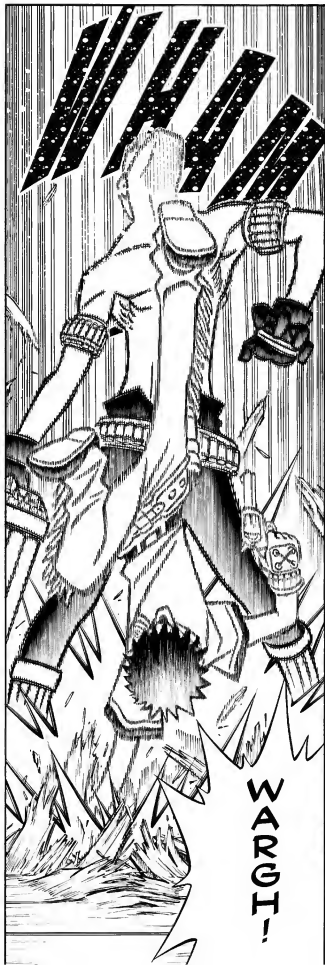
HE
DID IT
AGAIN...

WELL, I
GUESS IT'S
OKAY SINCE
THE GUESTS
LOVE IT.



KNT





W...H...



FWIP

W...

...WHERE ARE YOU?!

FWIP

!!

CURSE YOU!



HA!



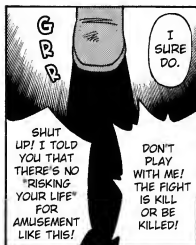
HE
COULDN'T
HAVE GONE
UNDER THE
FLOOR-
BOARDS?!

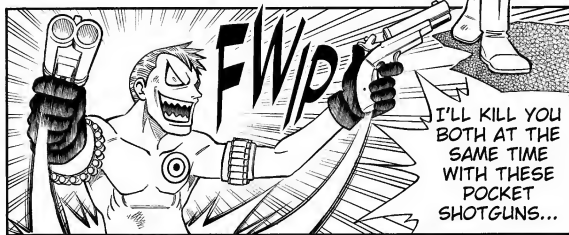


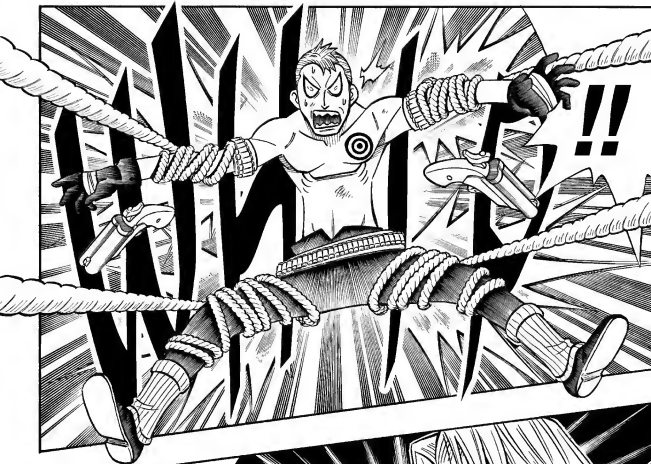
CRACK



**JACK
POT!!**

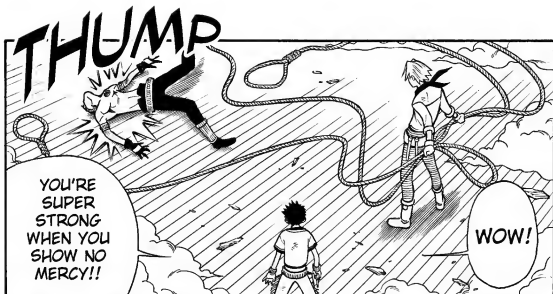






TENDRIL!





SOURCE OF THE IMAGE: FRANKLY, THERE WAS NONE FOR VIU. AFTER ALL, THE SITUATION WAS AS I DESCRIBED ON PAGE 26...

HOWEVER, THERE WAS ONE FOR VIU AS A KID (HEREAFTER LITTLE VIU). THERE WAS A LOT OF CONJECTURE, BUT THE IMAGE SOURCE FOR KID VIU WAS THE YOUNG LAD JOHNNY BOY WHO APPEARED IN A PROVIDER O COMMERCIAL THAT WAS SHOWING ON TV AT THE TIME.

IN INSTALLMENTS 1 THROUGH 5 WHICH COMPRISED THE PROLOGUE, THE REASON THERE WERE SO MANY SCENES WHERE VIU DOES NOTHING BUT RUN IS BECAUSE I WAS INFLUENCED BY THE STRANGE AND WONDERFUL SCENE FROM A COMMERCIAL WHERE JOHNNY BOY, WITH A DONUT IN HIS MOUTH, AND HIS DAD RUN AWAY. "LISTEN, JOHNNY BOY, THINK OF ANYONE WHO TRIES TO MAKE YOU PAY, EVEN THE PRESIDENT, AS YOUR ENEMY!"



DESIGN: I HAD SET IT FROM THE START THAT HIS HAIR BE SHORT AND SHOW HIS EYEBROWS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE SITUATION WAS AS DESCRIBED ON PAGE 26, IT WAS MOSTLY A DESIGN CREATED OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD.

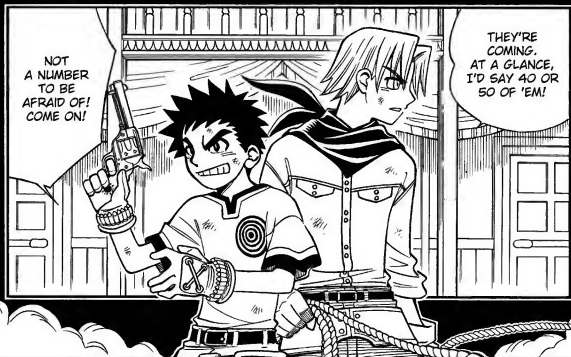
THE MAIN CHARACTER IS USUALLY DRAWN AND REFINED OVER AND OVER BEFORE SERIALIZATION TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH IT, BUT THAT PROCESS WAS COMPLETELY NONEXISTENT, SO DID VIU'S HAIR EVER CHANGE. TOWARD THE END, I GAVE UP AND SAID, "I DON'T CARE ALREADY IF HIS BANGS HANG OVER." SORRY.

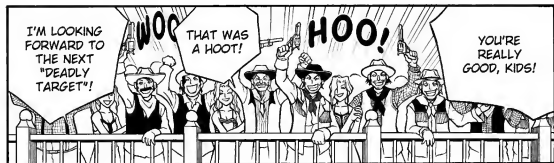
THAT'S HOW IT WAS WITH VIU, BUT I REALLY LIKE THE DESIGN OF HIS GLOVES. BUT WHO KNOWS, IT COULD BE A FAULTY, DANGEROUS-TO-THE-EXTREME DESIGN THAT WOULD LET HIS ENTIRE ARM GET BLOWN OFF IF THE GUN EVEN PARTIALLY MISFIRED.

ON A SIDE NOTE, THE ENGLISH SPELLING OF VIU'S NAME, VIU BANNES, WAS SOMETHING I HAD A FRIEND WHOM I MET DURING MY TRAVELS ACROSS AMERICA COME UP WITH. THANK YOU, MR. R.



CHAPTER 10: WILL RISING





THE OTHER IS
THE MYSTERY
LAD WHO
BEAT KEVIN
WITHOUT EVEN
FIRING HIS
GUN!



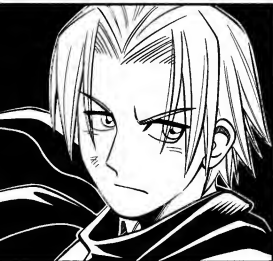
LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN,
NEW STARS
ARE BORN!

ONE IS THE
BRILLIANT ROPE
MASTER, WILL
JOHNSTON!

IF I CAN MANAGE
TO BRING THEM IN,
I CAN MAKE 50
TIMES WHAT I DO
NOW. THEY'RE
GOLDEN EGGS!



AWESOME.
THESE GUYS
ARE GOOD.
KEVIN CAN'T
HOLD A CANDLE
TO THEM.



YOU SIMPLY
MUST WORK
FOR US!
I'LL PAY YOU
TEN TIMES,
NO, TWENTY
TIMES WHAT
THE OTHER
SIDE DOES!

YOU'LL BE
MORE
POPULAR
THAN KEVIN
IN NO TIME!

WILL. I MEAN
WILL, MY SON!
HAVE YOU
THOUGHT
ABOUT WHAT
WE DISCUSSED
THIS
AFTERNOON?

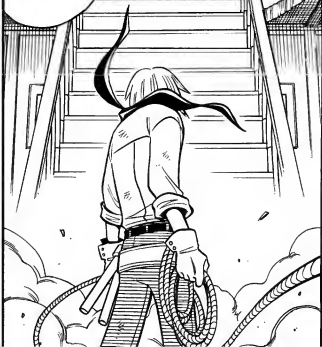


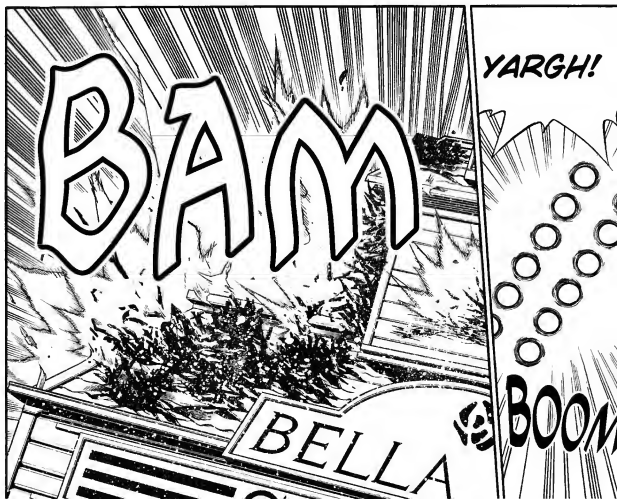
YOU SURE
ARE BEING
GENEROUS
WITH
THE MONEY,
AREN'T
YOU?

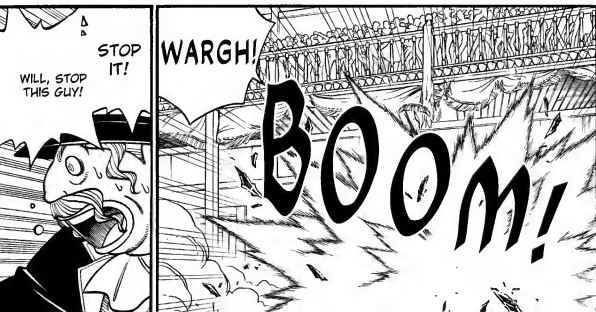
S H F

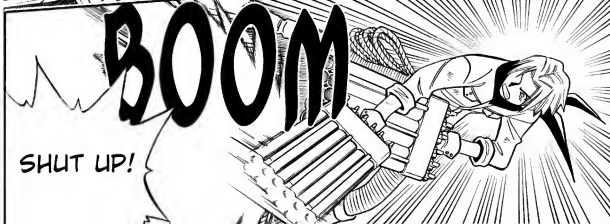
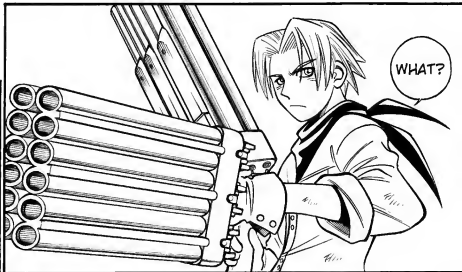
YOUNG
MAN! HOW
ABOUT
YOU?

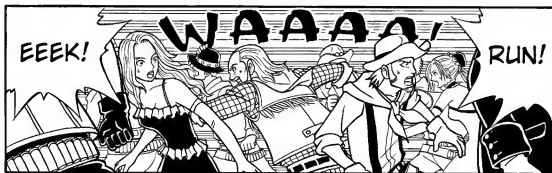
I'M TALKING
20 TIMES
HERE!
CAN'T
COMPLAIN,
RIGHT?





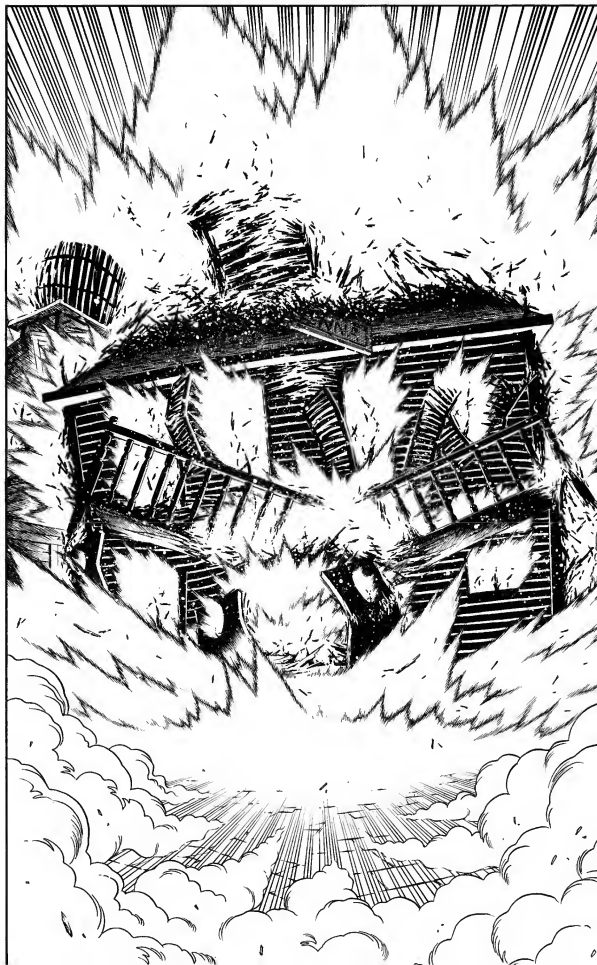






BOOM
BOOM





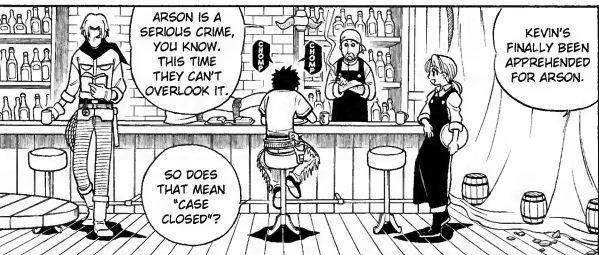
I'LL BET THAT
REALLY TAKES
A TOLL ON
CARLO.



ARSON IS A
SERIOUS CRIME,
YOU KNOW.
THIS TIME
THEY CAN'T
OVERLOOK IT.

SO DOES
THAT MEAN
"CASE
CLOSED"?

KEVIN'S
FINALLY BEEN
APPREHENDED
FOR ARSON.



THANKS TO THIS INCIDENT,
THE EYES OF DECENT
COUNCILMEN AND THE
SHERIFF ARE KEEPING
STRICTER WATCH, SO
THEY WON'T LET HIM
HAVE HIS WAY ANYMORE.

I SUPPOSE.
KNOWING CARLO,
HE'LL EVENTUALLY
BUILD A PLACE
JUST LIKE IT
THOUGH.



WILL.

OKAY
THEN!

I SEE.



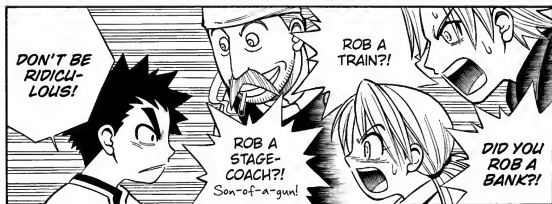




HEY, WILL THIS BE ENOUGH TO COVER THAT DEBT?



WHAT?



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!

ROB A TRAIN?!

ROB A STAGE-COACH?!
Son-of-a-gun!

DID YOU ROB A BANK?!

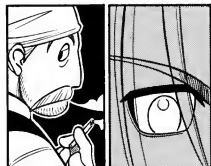


AND BESIDES, NOT ONLY IS IT HEAVY BUT IT TAKES UP SPACE AND GETS IN THE WAY WHEN I'M TRAVELING.

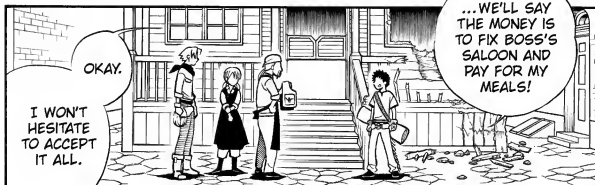
IT'S NOT MONEY I ASKED FOR IN THE FIRST PLACE,

BUT...

IT'S CLEAN MONEY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. GO AHEAD AND USE IT!



BROTHER...



...GO
ON
AHEAD.

SEE
YOU,
WILL.
I'LL...

TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP...

...I GUESS
I'LL START
TAKING CARE
OF LOOSE
ENDS.

WELL
...

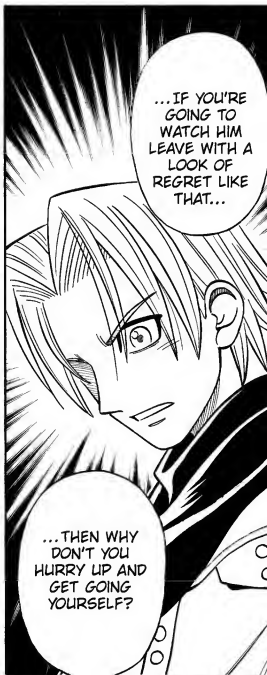
WHAT?!

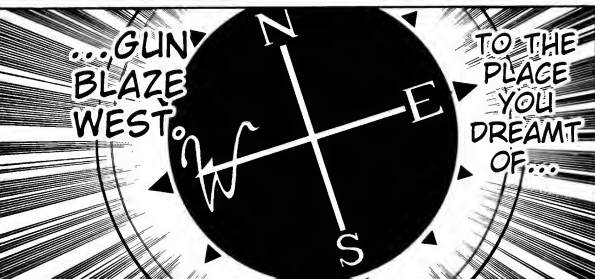
I'LL START
WITH PAYING
YOUR AND WILL'S
WAGES AND
TEN YEARS'
WORTH OF
BONUSES.

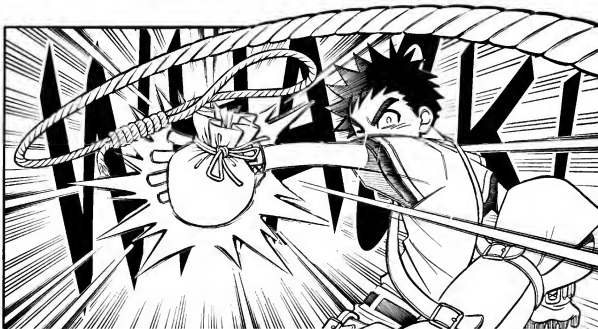
HE
LOOKED
SO HAPPY.

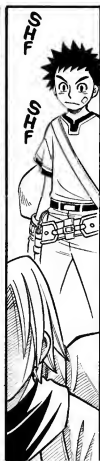
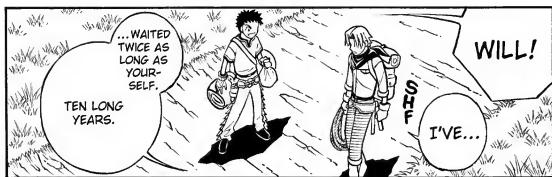
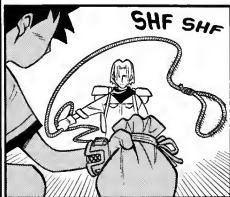
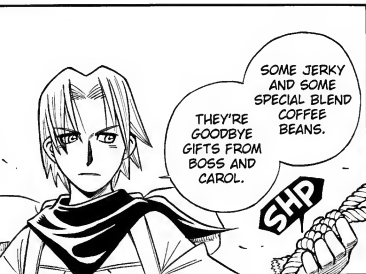
HE DIDN'T
EVEN LOOK
BACK.

YES
...



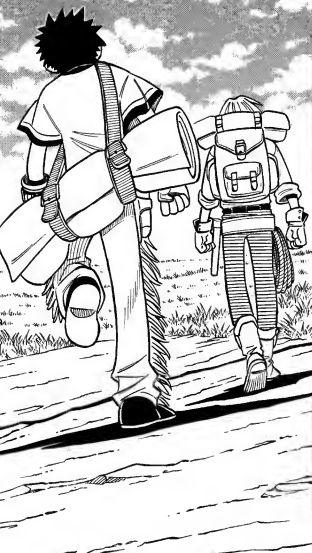








**JUST
YOU
WAIT,
GUN
BLAZE
WEST...!!**



**OKAY,
JUST YOU
WAIT, GUN
BLAZE
WEST.**



**THERE'S
NO PUZZLE
I CAN'T
SOLVE,
AFTER
ALL!**

**I'LL SOLVE
THE PUZZLE
AND REVEAL
THE TRUTH
BEHIND THE
LEGEND!**



**ONE
DAY
FOR
SURE,**

**ONE DAY
FOR SURE.**

**NOW,
FOR
SURE.**



CONCEPT: IN TANDEM WITH MY INTENTION TO MAKE VIU A SHONEN-TYPE MAIN CHARACTER, I THOUGHT OF MAKING MARCUS A PATHETIC UNDERDOG, WHO LOOKED LIKE A LOSER, WASN'T STRONG, AND WHO WAS MORE OR LESS A CHARACTER UNLIKE THOSE IN SHONEN STORIES.

ALTHOUGH THE BASICS FOR AN ADULT CHARACTER IN HIS POSITION IS SOMEONE COOL AND STRONG ENOUGH FOR THE MAIN CHARACTER TO ADMIRE AND ASPIRE TO BECOME, SOMEHOW FOR MARCUS, THAT WAS THE IMAGE THAT POPPED INTO MY MIND FROM THE VERY START. AN ADULT THAT ACTS LIKE A CHILD AND A CHLD THAT ACTS LIKE AN ADULT--THAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIU AND MARCUS THAT I WANTED TO PORTRAY.

PERSONALLY, MARCUS IS A CHARACTER I REALLY LIKE, AND I'D LIKE, IN SOME WAY OR FORM, TO BRING HIM BACK SOMEHOW.

IMAGE SOURCE: AS WAS THE CASE WITH LITTLE VIU, THE IMAGE SOURCE FOR MARCUS WAS JOHNNY BOY'S DAD, WHO APPEARED IN THE PROVIDER O COMMERCIALS. HE SEEMED TOTALLY GOOD FOR NOTHING, BUT HE GOT ALONG WITH HIS CHILDREN AND NEVER SPOILED THEM. SOMEHOW, I THINK THAT'S GREAT.

CHARACTER FILE #02



MARCUS HOMER

ANYWAY, I REALLY LOVED THE PROVIDER O COMMERCIALS. I SHOULD HAVE RECORDED THEM. TOO BAD. I REGRET IT NOW.

DESIGN: AIMING FOR THE LOOK OF A LOSER, I CHOSE THE ONE THAT HAD THE MOST INTERESTING FLAVOR FROM AMONG ABOUT FOUR DESIGNS.

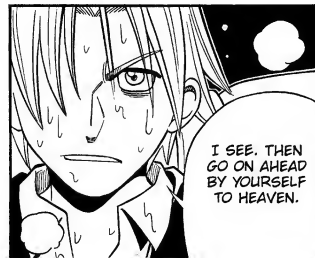
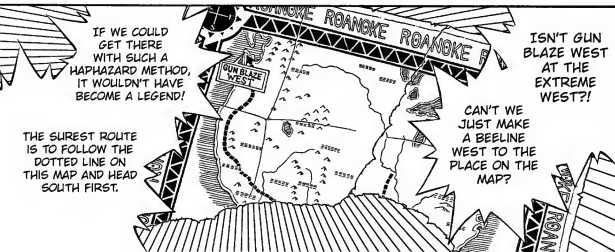
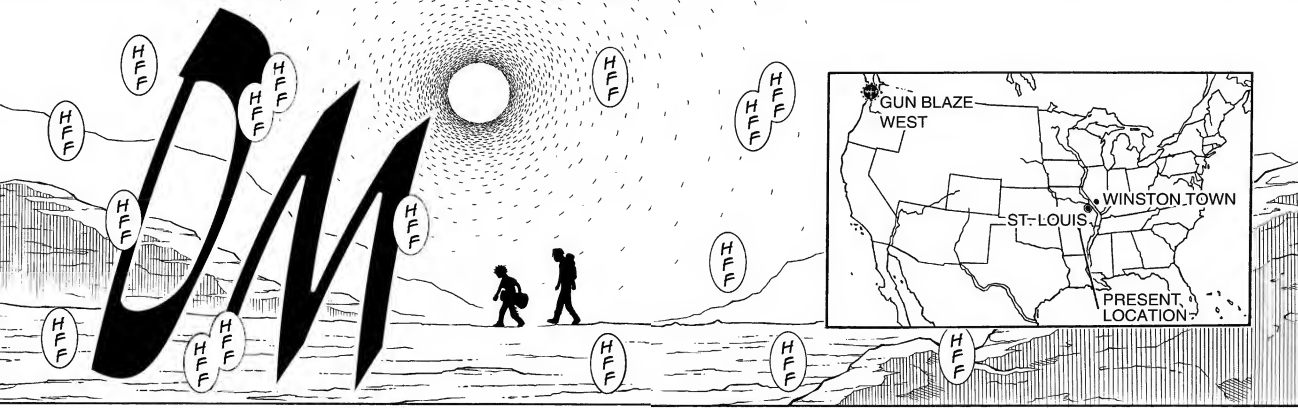
THE SCRUFFY BEARD, HUNCHED SHOULDERS, LONG TRUNK, SHORT LEGS AND BOWLEGGED STANCE MAKE IT A DESIGN FEMALE READERS WOULD LIKELY SHY AWAY FROM, BUT IT WAS QUITE WELL-RECEIVED AMONG MY FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES. I ALSO LIKED IT A GREAT DEAL AS WELL.

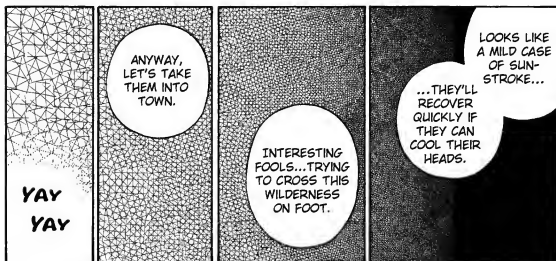
WHILE MARCUS'S ATTIRE WAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM TYPICAL GUNSLINGER WEAR, HE LOOKED LIKE A GUNSLINGER--THAT WAS WHAT I STROVE FOR AND CREATED BY STUDYING MANY RESOURCES. THE FOCUS IS ON THE FRONT THIGH POCKETS WHICH LOOK LIKE SOMETHING ONE MIGHT EXPECT, BUT DON'T SEE, ON TODAY'S WEAR.

ON A SIDE NOTE, AS I OPEN UP MY SKETCHBOOK TO THE FIRST DRAWINGS OF MARCUS, I NOTICE HE LOOKS A BIT LIKE SOMEONE I AM DEEPLY INDEBTED TO. (THE ACTUAL PERSON IS NOT A LOSER OF A MAN LIKE MARCUS. IN FACT, HE IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE: A NEAT GUY.)

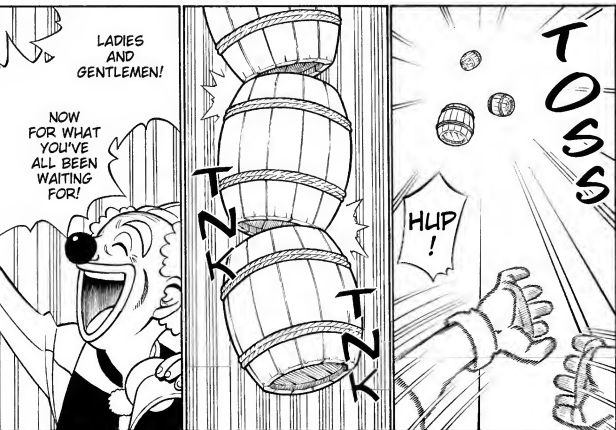
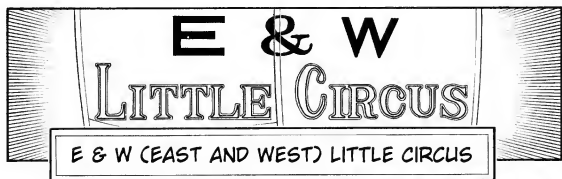
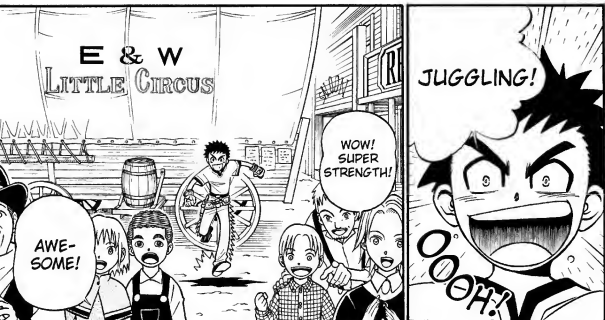


CHAPTER 11:
CIRCUS WONDER







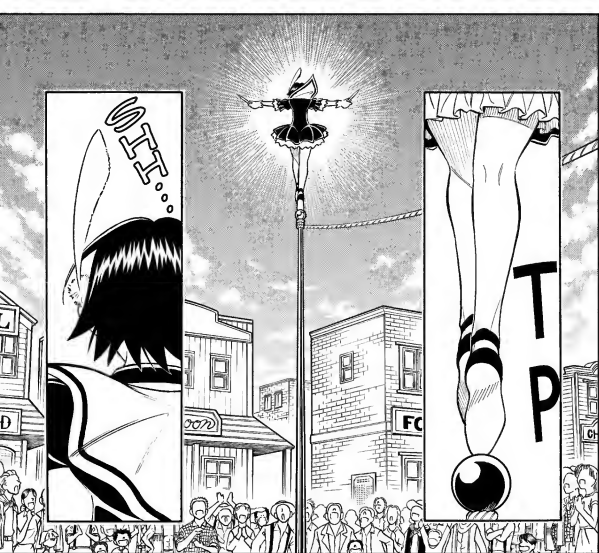


THE PRIDE OF
OUR E&W
LITTLE CIRCUS...
OUR TOP STAR!

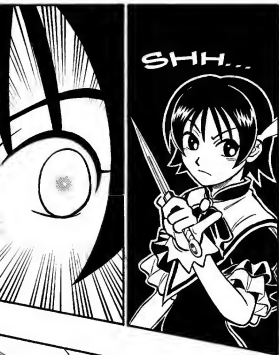
...COLICE
SATCHO!!

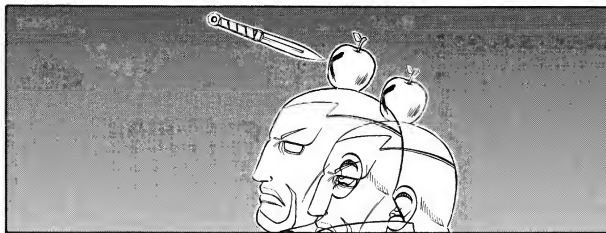
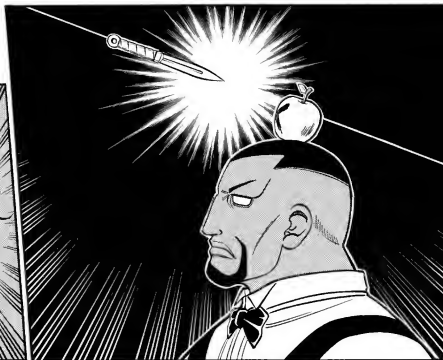
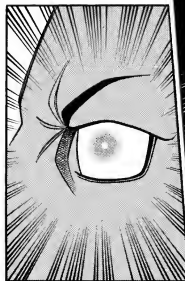


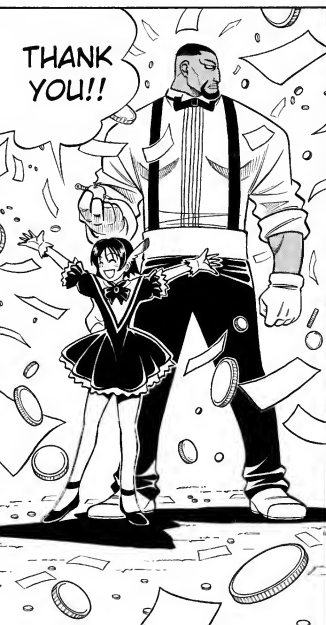
FROM JAPAN,
AN ISLAND
COUNTRY IN
THE FAR EAST.
THE BLOOD OF
THE SAMURAI
RUNS
THROUGH HER
VEINS, THE
"LADY BLADE
MASTER"...

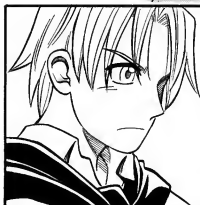












THAT'S NO
STUNT. IT
REACHES INTO
THE REALM OF
AN "ART" THAT
COULD ACTUALLY
BE USED IN A
FIGHT.

SHE HIT HER
TARGET FROM THAT
DISTANCE AND
THOSE DIFFERENCE
IN HEIGHTS
MASTERFULLY.
AND SHE HIT
IT DEAD
CENTER...

TA DA!



INCRED-
IBLE.



THEY SAID
SHE CAME
FROM
JAPAN.

BUT WHO
EXACTLY
IS SHE?



JUST BEFORE
THAT, THERE
WAS GREAT
CIVIL WAR IN
JAPAN.

IT WAS
THE SECOND
YEAR OF MEIJI,
SO 1869,
I BELIEVE.

WILL, WAS IT?
YOU SURE
KNOW A
LOT...

YES,
THAT'S
IT!

THE BOSHIN
WAR?

THAT WAS WHEN 23
YOUNG SAMURAI POSED AS
FOREIGN ENGINEERS AND
SET OUT FOR AMERICA
IN SEARCH OF A NEW
LAND.

IT WAS SO
BAD, EVEN
THE SAMURAI
COULD
BARELY KEEP
THEMSELVES
FED.

AIZU LOST
THE BOSHIN
WAR.
WE WERE
DEVASTATED.

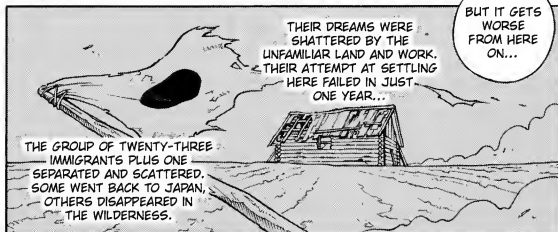
YOU'RE JUST
LIKE HIM...THE
TYPE THAT
DOESN'T THINK
ABOUT WHAT
COMES NEXT...

GOOD FOR
YOU!!

IT SEEMED
SORTA FUN,
SO I CAME
ALONG WITH
THEM!

GRIN

AND...





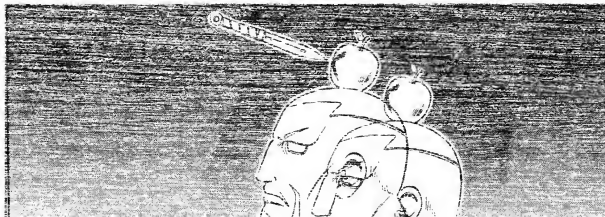
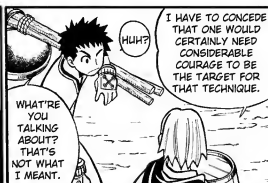
BUT WHAT YOU DID...

WITH THE SKILL YOU DISPLAYED AT THE CLIMAX OF THE SHOW, YOU COULD BE THE STAR ANYWHERE YOU GO.

CERTAINLY WITH THAT PERSONALITY AND THE SKILLS I SAW, IT WOULD BE FUN.

YES, IT'S FUN!

YOU'VE HAD AN EVENTFUL LIFE, HAVEN'T YOU?





VIL'S THE
NAME, RIGHT?
YOU WERE
ABLE TO SEE
THAT?



...I THOUGHT
I SAW YOU
AND THE
RINGMASTER
WITH A
MYSTERIOUS
LOOK IN YOUR
EYES, AND THEN
YOU BOTH
BECAME MUCH
MORE
REASSURED.

IT
SEEMED
THAT
FOR
A SPLIT
SECOND
...



HUH?

...HAVE
THAT
"TALENT."

THAT
MEANS YOU
ALSO...



...TALKING
ABOUT?

WHAT'RE
YOU...



CONCEPT: WITH COLICE, THE HEROINE OF THIS VOLUME, APPEARING QUITE LATE, CISSY WAS INTRODUCED AS A SUBSTITUTE HEROINE. I MADE HER VERY CONVENTIONAL IN ORDER FOR HER TO BEAR TWO ROLES: THAT OF LITTLE VIIU'S GUARDIAN AND AN AVERAGE PERSON WITH COMMON SENSE.

AT FIRST, SHE WAS NOT A TEACHER, BUT AT THE SUGGESTION OF MY EDITOR, WHO WANTED TO INSERT A SCHOOL SCENE IF POSSIBLE, SHE BECAME A TEACHER. IN THE END, I ONLY INSERTED THAT PARTICULAR SCENE AT THE START OF NUMBER 2. HMMM...

CHARACTER FILE #03

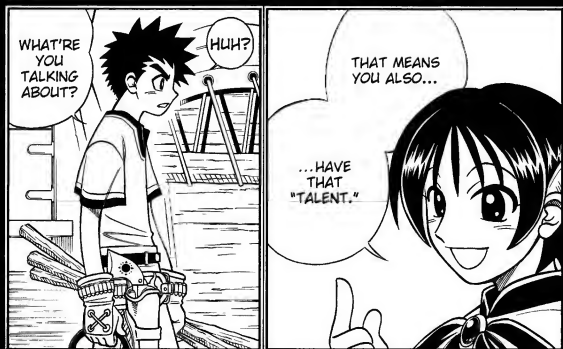


CISSY BANNES

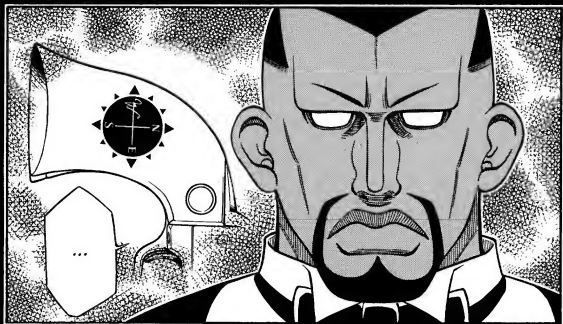
IMAGE SOURCE: THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NONE FOR CISSY. THERE WAS NO TIME, SO I COULDN'T THINK IT THROUGH THOROUGHLY.

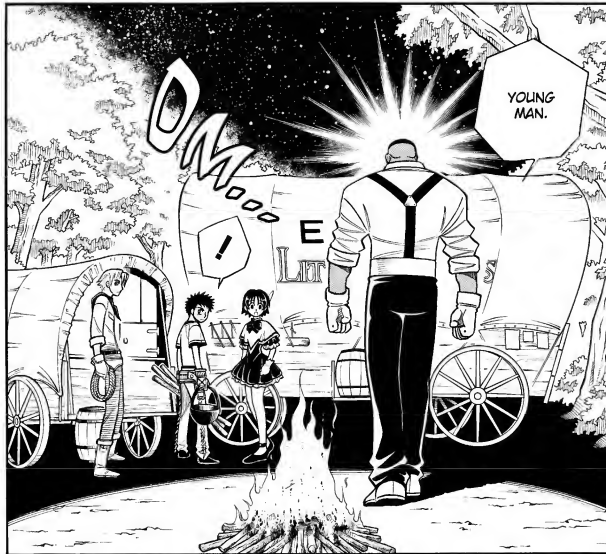
DESIGN: I DID THIS PRACTICALLY OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD BECAUSE I HAD NO TIME. I DREW HER AS A VERY CONVENTIONAL ANGLO-SAXON WOMAN. GIVEN THAT, THOUGH, IT'S A DESIGN I SORT OF LIKE.

ON A SIDE NOTE, I PUT GLASSES ON HER TO MATCH THE FACT SHE WAS A TEACHER, BUT I NEVER CONSIDERED HER A "GLASSES GIRL."



CHAPTER 12: SIGN TO THE WEST





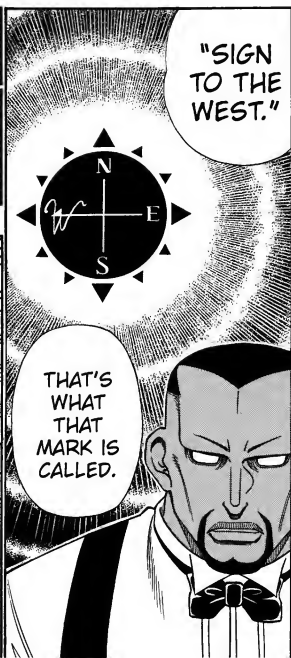
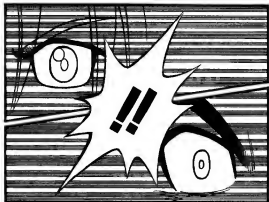
WILL HAS
THAT SAME
MARK,
THOUGH
IT'S NOT
ON A GUN.

IT WAS
GIVEN
TO ME!



YOUR
PISTOL
WITH THAT
MARK...
WHERE DID
YOU GET IT?







DON'T DO IT.



...WHEN
I WAS
YOUNGER
...

...I SAW
MANY PEOPLE
WHO WERE
TRYING TO
GET TO GUN
BLAZE WEST.

SHFF
SHFF



MEN WHO
THIRSTED
FOR BLOOD.



MEN WHO
WERE
ARROGANT
ABOUT THEIR
STRENGTH.

THERE
WASN'T A
DECENT
MAN
AMONG
THEM.

MEN WHO
WERE
DROWNING
IN THE
NEED FOR
FAME.



MEN WHO
WERE
CRAZED BY
MONEY.

BUT HE
SOON
WENT
MAD...



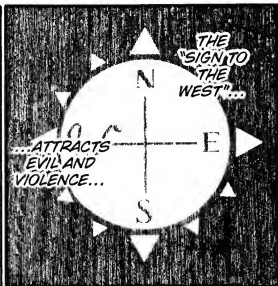
NO...
THERE
WAS ONE.

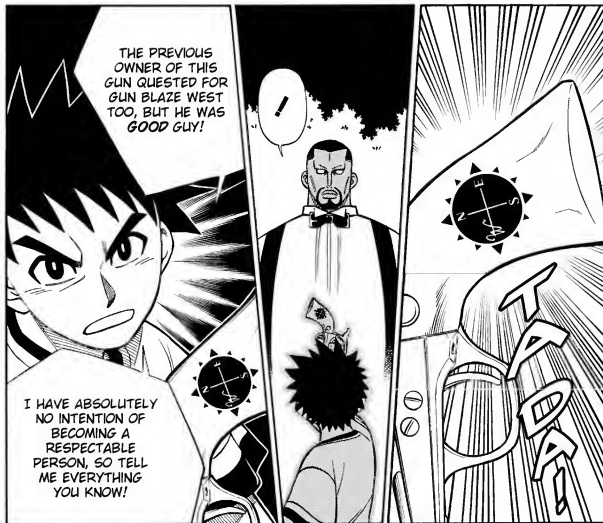
GUN BLAZE
WEST IS WHAT
YOU MIGHT
CALL THE
"LOSERS' WISH"
OF THOSE WHO
LOVE EVIL
AND VIOLENCE.

YOU TWO
WHO ARE
STILL YOUNG
SHOULD AIM
FOR A MUCH
BETTER
DREAM...

...ATTRACTS
EVIL AND
VIOLENCE...

THE
"SIGN TO
THE
WEST"...











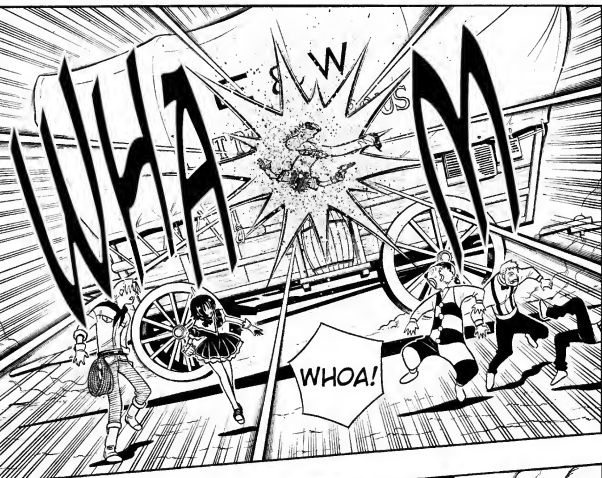
I DON'T OWN
A GUN THAT
I'D USE AGAINST
A CHILD.

I'LL FIGHT
BAREHANDED.



I SEE.







DAMN
PUNK!



EVEN IF YOU
DRAW IT, YOU CAN'T
JUST RECKLESSLY
POINT THE MUZZLE
AT PEOPLE!

WE'LL START WITH
THE BASICS. NEVER
TAKE YOUR GUN
FROM ITS HOLSTER
UNLESS YOU'RE
GOING TO USE IT.

GRIP

THERE IS
A RISK OF
MISFIRING,
SO ALWAYS
POINT THE
MUZZLE DOWN,
NOT UP!

THERE IS
A RISK OF
ACCIDENTAL
DISCHARGE,
SO ALWAYS
KEEP YOUR
FINGER OFF
THE
TRIGGER!

I EVEN
CAN'T
BUDGE
HIM...

AND THE MOST
FUNDAMENTAL OF
ALL THE BASICS...
WHEN YOU SHOOT,
THINK CAREFULLY
BEFORE YOU FIRE.

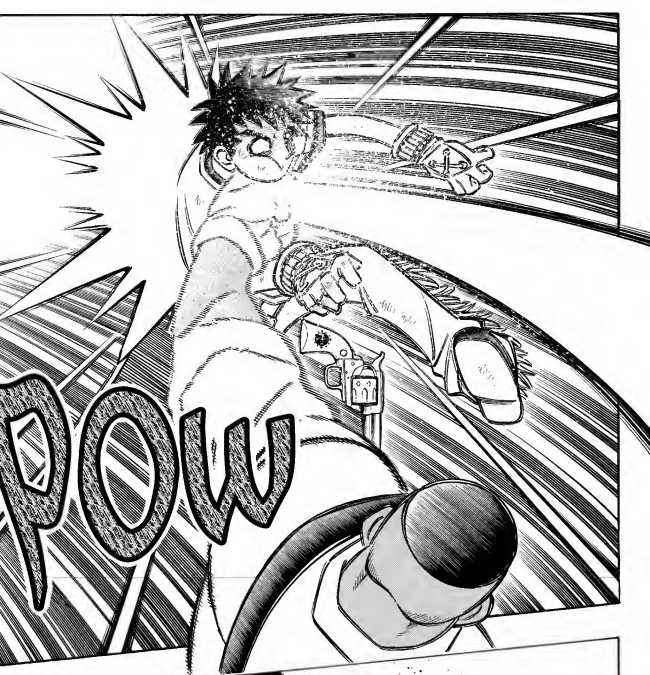
"WHY, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE
AM I ABOUT TO SHOOT?"
THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT
WHAT THAT MEANS.

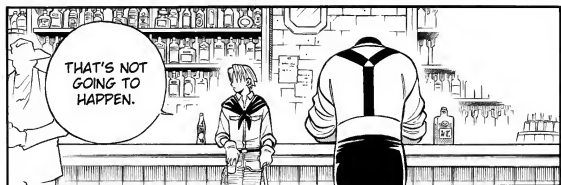
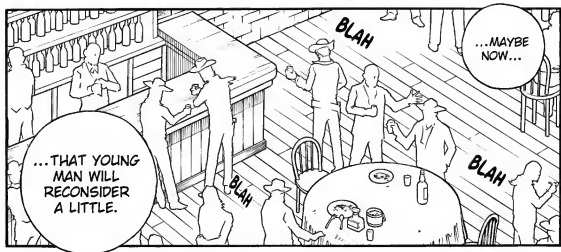
SHOOOP

HAH!

DANG!







TO ME,
FIGHTING IS
A LAST RESORT,
SO I WON'T
FIGHT NOW,

BUT WHEN
THE TIME
COMES, I'LL
GO ALL OUT
AS WELL.

DARN
RIGHT.

...FALL
PREY TO
EVIL AND
VIOLENCE.

I CAN'T STOP
THEIR YOUTHFUL
ENERGY...BUT WITH
THEIR CURRENT
STRENGTH, THESE
TWO WILL MOST
CERTAINLY...

I
SEE...

...I SAID
DON'T DO IT.

THAT'S
WHY...

E

EVEN NOW,
IF HE GETS
SERIOUS,
THEY SAY
HE COULD
EVEN DODGE
BULLETS.

IN HIS YOUNGER
DAYS, RINGMASTER
USED TO BE AN
AWESOMELY STRONG
OUTLAW IN THE
TERRITORY OF UTAH.
THEY CALLED HIM THE
"WESTERN PHANTOM."



VII,
ARE YOU...
CRYING?



...CRYING?



ARE
YOU...

OH?

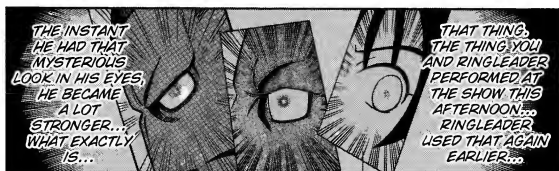
WHO'D CRY
OVER A THING
LIKE THIS?

STUPID!

I MADE UP
MY MIND NOT
TO CRY THAT
DAY FIVE
YEARS AGO!



I'M STRONG!
I'M GOING
TO BECOME
STRONG!
THAT'S WHY...



CONCEPT: HE'S A CHARACTER I CONSIDER A CONVENTIONAL "EVIL OUTLAW."

AT THE START, I GAVE A LOT OF THOUGHT TO "HOW BEST DO I ACCUSTOM READERS IN A SIMPLE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD OF A WESTERN, SOMETHING THAT THEY ARE NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH?" DOING THAT, HOWEVER, APPEARED TO HAVE LED TO SHACKLING BOTH THE CHARACTERS AND STORY AND PREVENTED THEM FROM REALLY DEVELOPING. WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT NOW, I FEEL VERY SORRY FOR THIS CHARACTER. I SHOULD HAVE SPICED HIM UP MUCH MORE.

IMAGE SOURCE: HE IS THE IMAGE, AS-IS, OF A TYPICAL "EVIL OUTLAW."

CHARACTER FILE #04



WILLIAM KENBROWN

DESIGN: I MADE A VERY SIMPLISTIC DECISION THAT AN "EVIL OUTLAW" NEEDED A BLACK TEN-GALLON HAT AND BLACK SUIT. HIS PECULIAR JUTTING JAW AND LONG, SLENDER ARMS AND LEGS WERE A PRODUCT OF MY UNCHANGING PENCHANT FOR "WANTING TO DRAW SOMETHING WEIRD!!" I LIKE IT A LOT.

ON A SIDE NOTE, KENBROWN HAS A JUNIOR. THERE WAS A STORY PROPOSAL FOR HIM TO LATER BECOME VIU'S SELF-PROCLAIMED RIVAL. I WAS THINKING OF JUNIOR BECOMING AN ENJOYABLE AND STRONGLY UNIQUE GANG CHARACTER. I WISH I COULD HAVE DRAWN HIM...

CHAPTER 13: SHOOTING TRAINING



IN OTHER
WORDS,
"A FOCUSED
MOMENT."

CONCENTRATION
ONE!



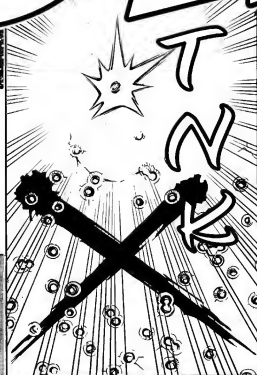
...YOU INCREASE
SPEED AND
PRECISION, NOT
WHEN YOU
MAKE A MOVE,
BUT A STEP
EARLIER, AT
THE STAGE OF
"RECOGNITION."

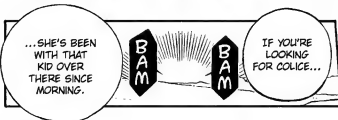
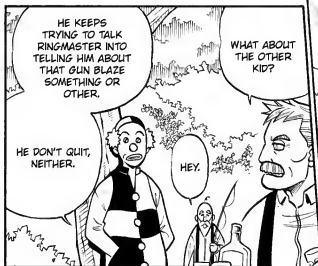
BY BOOSTING
YOUR FOCUS
TO MAXIMUM
FOR A
MOMENT...



CHAPTER 13:

SHOOTING
TRAINING









WELL...
TRAIN
YOUR
EYES.

...TO BE
ABLE TO
DO THAT?!

WHAT DO
I HAVE
TO DO...



BAZZ

BAZZ

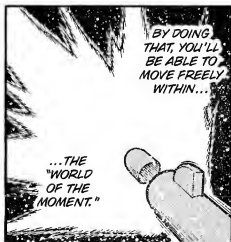


BECAUSE I
WAS FOCUSED ON
"RECOGNITION"...
THAT IS, ON
SEEING...

YOU MENTIONED
THAT THE LOOK
IN MY EYES
CHANGED,
DIDN'T YOU?

THAT WASN'T
MAGIC OR
ANYTHING
LIKE THAT.

...THE PUPILS OF MY
EYES MOMENTARILY
CONTRACT, WHICH
GIVES ME THAT
LOOK.



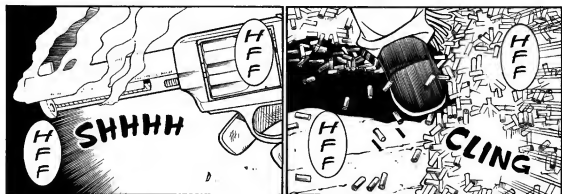
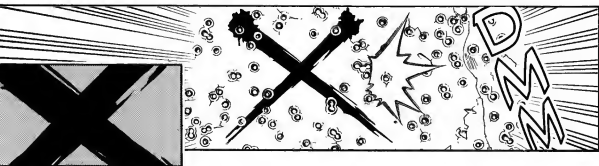
...THE
"WORLD
OF THE
MOMENT."

BY DOING
THAT, YOU'LL
BE ABLE TO
MOVE FREELY
WITHIN...



...DIRECTLY
RESULTS IN
INSTANTANEOUS
REACTION OR
ACTION, THEN
YOU'VE ATTAINED
CONCENTRATION
"ONE."

FOCUSING
ON NOTHING
BUT
SEEING...





HE'LL
NEVER HIT
HIS TARGET?



THAT'S
HOW I SET
IT UP.

THAT'S
RIGHT.



THE COLT SAA IS A GREAT
GUN AND QUITE WELL
KNOWN, BUT EVEN SO,
THE DISTANCE AT WHICH
YOU CAN HIT WHAT
YOU AIM FOR WITH
ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY
IS FIVE METERS.



JUDGING BY THE
WAY IT LOOKS,
I'M GUESSING
HIS GUN IS AN
EARLY EDITION
COLT SAA*.

* COLT SINGLE ACTION ARMY

THEN WHY
DID YOU GO
THROUGH THE
TROUBLE OF...



THE DISTANCE
I SET HIM
UP AT IS
15 METERS...
THREE TIMES
GREATER.



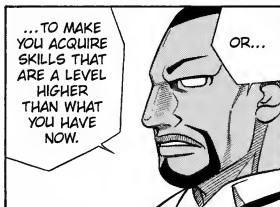
A PERSON
WITH EXPERI-
ENCE OR
WHO'S PUT IN
SOME SERIOUS
HOURS IS ONE
THING...

...BUT AT HIS
LEVEL NOW,
HE COULD FIRE
HUNDREDS OF
ROUNDS AND
NEVER HIT HIS
TARGET DEAD
CENTER.

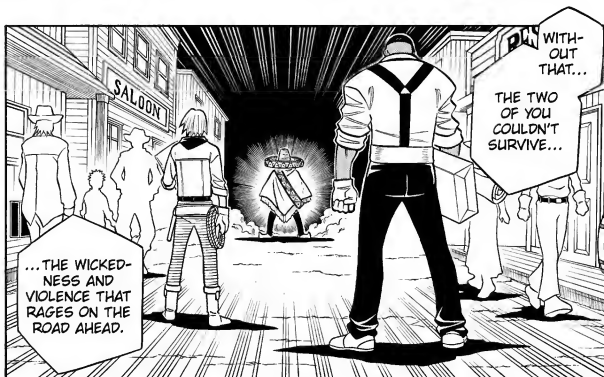
THAT'S
RIGHT. THE
ACCURACY OF
A PISTOL IS
ACTUALLY
A LOT LESS
THAN WHAT
PEOPLE WHO
DON'T USE
PISTOLS
THINK.

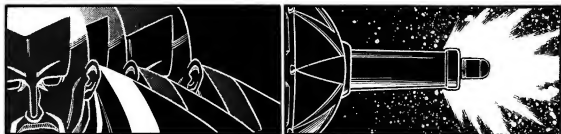


FIVE
METERS?



OR...







HE
DODGED
THE
BULLETS
...!!



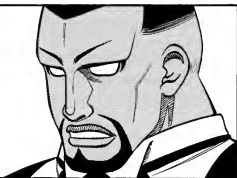
I'VE BEEN
LOOKING
FOR YOU,
PARTNER.

YOU HAVEN'T
LOST THE
SKILLS THAT
EARNED YOU
THE NAME...
"WESTERN
PHANTOM."



GUALARRIPA.

"FORMER"
PARTNER.
DON'T GET
IT WRONG.



THERE WERE
DECENT FOLK,
BUT EVEN
THEY QUICKLY
WENT MAD...

"FORMER"
PARTNER?



HEH HEH
HEH...
WHAT
A COLD
GREETING.

WHAT IS IT
YOU WANT
AFTER
ALL THIS
TIME...?



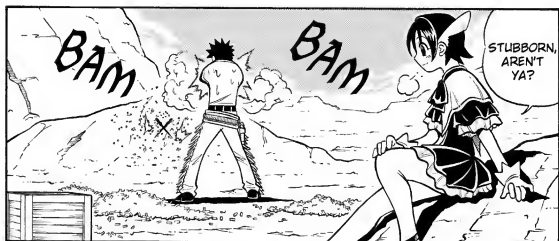
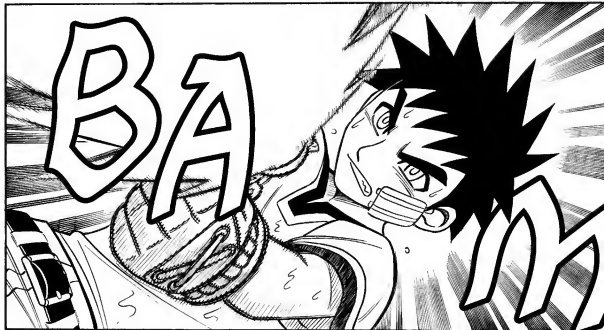
HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN?
IT'S 1880
THIS YEAR!

A
"ZERO YEAR"
THAT COMES
ONLY ONCE
EVERY TEN
YEARS!!

...SO WE CAN
REALIZE THE
DREAM WE
COULDN'T
REALIZE
20 YEARS
AGO.

I CAME
HERE WITH
AN OFFER,
RODRIGEZ...





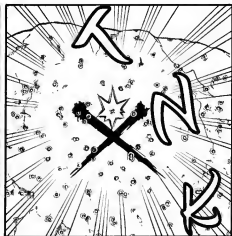
AND BY DOING
SO, I WILL GET
STRONGER!!



...AND
EVENTUALLY
WAS ABLE TO
RUN WITH HIGH
SPEED AND
ENDURANCE!

I RAN
FOR FIVE
YEARS
STRAIGHT
...

READ
THIS
WAY



...SO
THERE'S NO
NEED TO
RUSH SO
MUCH.

BUT IT TOOK
EVEN ME HALF
A YEAR TO
ACHIEVE CON-
CENTRATION
ONE...



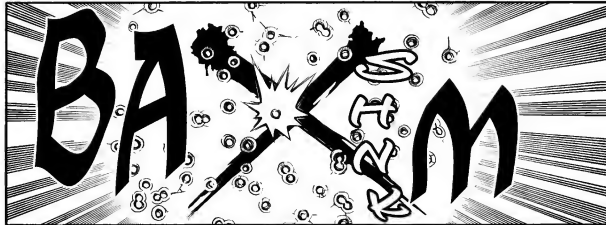
ALL
RIGHT!!

MAYBE,
JUST
MAYBE!

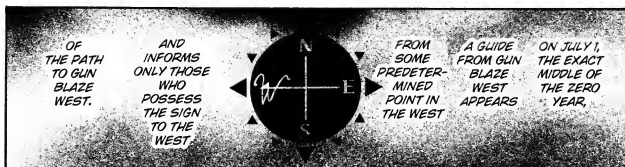
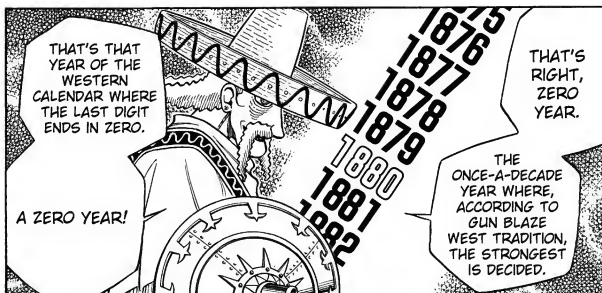
HEY! YOU'RE
GETTING
CLOSER
TO THE
CENTER.

TMP TMP
TMP











CONCEPT: SINCE VIU AND COLICE ARE CHARACTERS WITH SOME TRAITS ONE WOULD NOT NORMALLY EXPECT, I CONCEIVED OF WILL AS A CHARACTER THAT WOULD FOLLOW THEM BOTH. IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER OF THE THREE TYPES--INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND VOLITIONAL--OF CHARACTERS. (JUST FYI, VIU IS THE VOLITIONAL AND COLICE IS THE ALL-AROUND CHARACTER WHO POSSESSES ALL THE TRAITS.)

UNLIKE VIU WHO HAD AN INFATUATION WITH STRENGTH OR COLICE WITH HER CURIOSITY, MY INITIAL CONCEPT OF WILL WAS AN INTELLECTUAL WITH A MORE ACADEMIC APPROACH TO SEEKING GUN BLAZE WEST BUT WHO, WHEN THE TIME CAME, BATTLED BY COMBINING KNOWLEDGE WITH COURAGE TO CREATE WISDOM. I THOUGHT THIS WAS TOO CONSERVATIVE, HOWEVER, SO I HURRIEDLY ADDED ON THE BOUNCER ELEMENT. IN HINDSIGHT, HOWEVER, I THINK THAT THIS NEUTRALIZED HIS STRONGEST CHARACTERISTIC, THAT OF BEING AN INTELLECTUAL, MAKING HIS CHARACTER WEAKER. I REGRET THAT.

SINCE VIU, COLICE AND WILL BEGAN MAKING THEIR MOVE ONLY AFTER THE THREE OF THEM GOT TOGETHER, WILL SERVED WELL AS THE VOICE OF REASON. I'D LIKE TO TRY ONCE AGAIN SOMETIME AT DOING AN INTELLECTUAL-TYPE CHARACTER.

CHARACTER FILE #05



WILL JOHNSTON

IMAGE SOURCE: MY IMAGE SOURCE FOR WILL WAS THE ECCENTRIC YOUNG QUENTIN WHO WAS TREATED LIKE AN OUTCAST BY THE REST OF HIS SCHOOL IN THE MOVIE *OCTOBER SKY*. THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN THE MOVIE MIGHT THINK, "WHAT? HE'S ENTIRELY DIFFERENT!" BUT IT WAS QUENTIN'S SINGLE-MINDED DILIGENCE IN HIS STUDIES DESPITE COMING FROM A POOR FAMILY THAT BECAME MY IMAGE SOURCE FOR WILL.

OCTOBER SKY IS AN UNSPECTACULAR FILM, BUT IT IS A GOOD MOVIE. I RECOMMEND IT WITH CONFIDENCE TO ANYONE WHO HAS EVEN ONCE DREAMED OF OUTER SPACE OR WHO IS A FAN OF *STAND BY ME*.

DESIGN: HERE AGAIN, SINCE VIU AND COLICE DO NOT LOOK LIKE WHAT ONE MIGHT NORMALLY EXPECT IN A WESTERN, I MADE WILL LOOK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE LIKE A TYPICAL BOY IN A WESTERN.

ON ONE ASPECT, WILL'S HEIGHT, I WAS VERY PARTICULAR. IN MY PREVIOUS WORK, *RUIROLINI KENSHIN*, I LOOKED FOR SOME WAY TO BLEND THE HEIGHTS OF THE CHARACTERS WHO ENDED UP AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SCALE. (FOR EXAMPLE, IT WAS QUITE DIFFICULT TO HAVE AOSHI AND MISAO STAND NATURALLY NEXT TO EACH OTHER IN THE SAME PANEL.) AS A TEST, I TRIED THIS, THAT AND A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS. I HAD A BIT OF SUCCESS, I THINK.

ON A SIDE NOTE, THE IDEA FOR THE COMPASS IN WILL'S POSSESSION CAME FROM A GOOD NOVELIST FRIEND OF MINE. THANK YOU, MR. K.

YOU'LL
HAVE
TO DIE,
KID!!

ANYONE
SEEKING
GUN
BLAZE
WEST IS MY
ENEMY!

SWSH!

SO YOU'RE
SEEKING GUN
BLAZE
WEST,
TOO?!

DON'T
TALK SO
SELFISHLY.

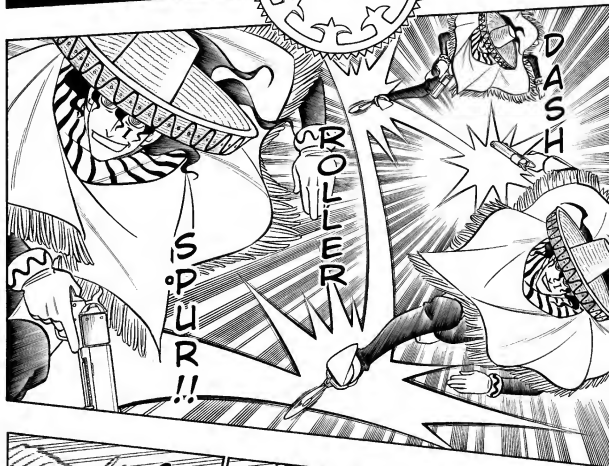
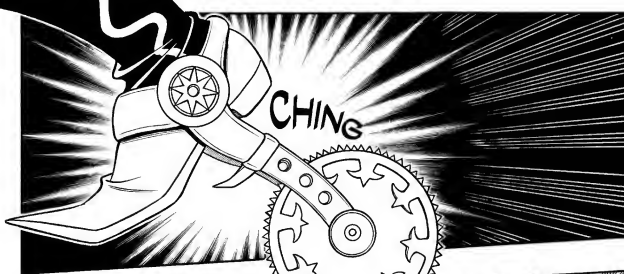
CHAPTER 14: POINT: 20 YEARS AGO

HUMP

!

NEED YOU
EVEN
ASK?!

HERE
I COME!





HO HO!
YOU'RE
PRETTY
SKILLED.

EVEN IF YOU
WEREN'T ABLE
TO RETURN FIRE
BECAUSE OF MY
SPEED, I WASN'T
EXPECTING YOU TO
AVOID ME POINTING
MY GUN AT YOU.

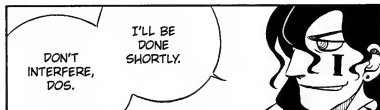
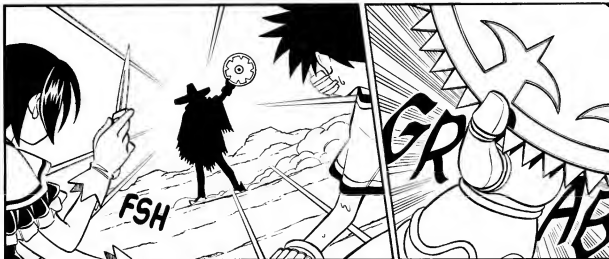
YOU!

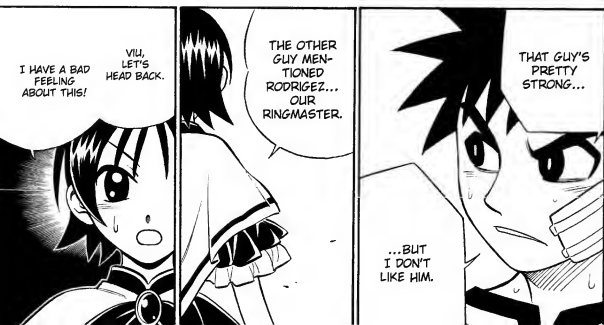
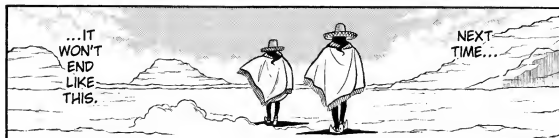
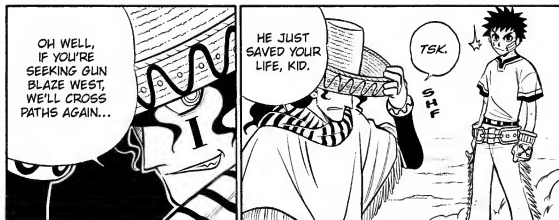


FULL!!

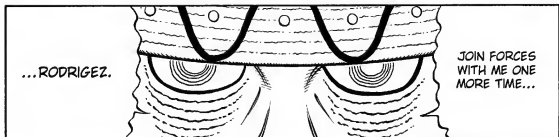
COLICE, GET
OUT THE WAY!

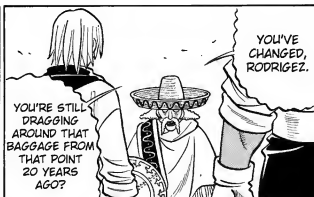
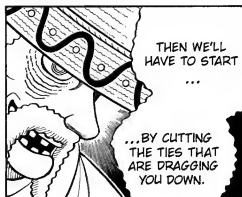






ROAR!







ALL I
WANT
TO DO...

...IS GET TO
GUN BLAZE
WEST FOR
SURE THIS
TIME.

HEH HEH
HEH.
DON'T
GLARE AT
ME LIKE
THAT.

I DON'T
WANT TO
FIGHT YOU.

SHE...

SHE...



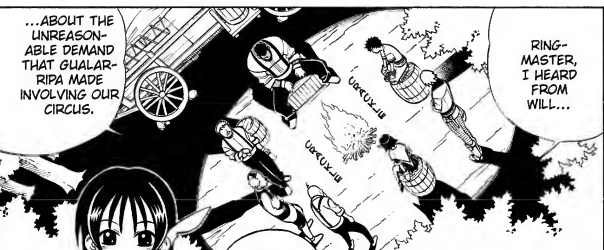
OR WILL YOU
REFUSE AND
EXPOSE YOUR
PRECIOUS
CIRCUS TO
GUNFIRE?

WILL YOU DO
AS I ASK,
COOPERATE
WITH ME FOR
ONE YEAR, AND
SETTLE THIS
AMICABLY?



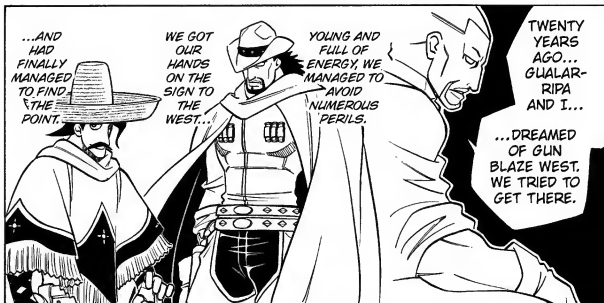
I'LL BE
LOOKING
FORWARD
TO A
FAVORABLE
ANSWER,
PARTNER.

I'LL SHOW
UP AGAIN
TOMORROW
MORNING.





I WANT
TO
KNOW!



...AND
HAD
FINALLY
MANAGED
TO FIND
THE
POINT.

WE GOT
OUR
HANDS
ON THE
SIGN TO
THE
WEST...

YOUNG AND
FULL OF
ENERGY, WE
MANAGED TO
AVOID
NUMEROUS
PERILS.

TWENTY
YEARS
AGO...
GUALAR-
RIPA
AND I...

...DREAMED
OF GUN
BLAZE WEST.
WE TRIED TO
GET THERE.



IT WAS
A TINY
PIONEER
TOWN.

THAT YEAR'S
POINT WAS
LOCATED RIGHT
IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE
WILDERNESS.



FLOCKED TO
THAT TINY
TOWN IN
DROVES.

OUTLAWS AND
GUNSLINGERS
TRYING TO
FIND GUN
BLAZE WEST



IN NO TIME AT ALL A SCRAMBLE FOR THE SIGN BEGAN, AND KILLINGS INVOLVING THE TOWNS-PEOPLE SOON BEGAN. THAT TINY TOWN WAS ANNIHILATED IN JUST A SINGLE NIGHT...

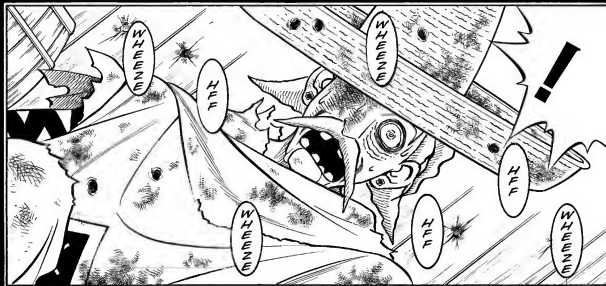
MOST OF THE 'OUTLAWS' WHO FLOCKED TO THE TOWN WERE MEN WHO DIDN'T HAVE THE SIGN TO THE WEST...



C'MON.

HEY...

GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF!





FSH!!

GAB



TANYA!



**TANYA!
TANYA!**

**ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?!**

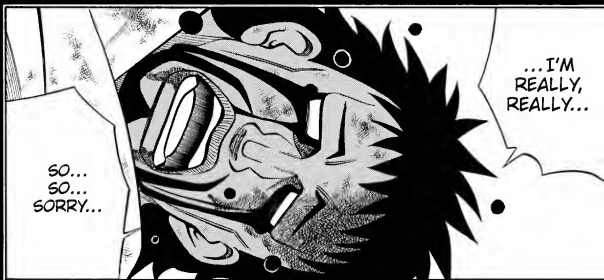
**GET
AHOLD OF
YOURSELF!**



BAM BAM



TANYA!!





...IN THE
PAST...

IT'S...



...I
ONCE TOLD
YOU...

WU...
WILL...
LET ME
REPEAT THE
WORDS...



WHAT'S
THERE TO
THINK
ABOUT!

THERE'S
NOTHING
TO
DISCUSS!!

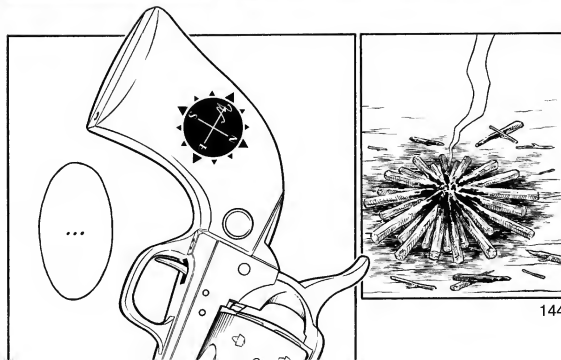


INSTEAD
OF WORRY-
ING ABOUT
US...
...YOU
SHOULD
BE THINKING
ABOUT WHAT
TO DO NEXT.

GUN BLAZE WEST IS
THE 'LOSERS' WISH'
OF THOSE WHO
LOVE WICKEDNESS
AND VIOLENCE.



YOU TWO WHO ARE
STILL YOUNG
SHOULD AIM FOR A
MUCH BETTER
DREAM...





CONCEPT: WITH WILL'S CHARACTER ESTABLISHED, CAROL'S CHARACTER WAS COMPLETE, SO I DID NOT GIVE HER VERY DEEP THOUGHT. THIS WAS DURING THE TIME WHEN I WAS IN THE WORST POSSIBLE CONDITION AND BOTH MY MIND AND BODY WERE IN SHAMBLES, SO I COULDN'T PUT TOO MUCH THOUGHT INTO HER.

IN THE BEGINNING, I THOUGHT OF WILL'S FAMILY AS BEING COMPRISED OF HIS PARENTS, A YOUNGER BROTHER AND TWO YOUNGER SISTERS, BUT WITH SO MANY PEOPLE, I DIDN'T THINK I COULD MAKE THE STORY COME TOGETHER WELL, SO I BOLDLY REDUCED IT TO JUST HIS FATHER AND YOUNGER SISTER. BUT REALLY, I ABSOLUTELY DIDN'T GIVE IT ANY FURTHER THOUGHT... READING OVER MY WORK, SHE WAS SO CONSIDERATE OF HER OLDER BROTHER, SO I SHOULD HAVE PUT MORE THOUGHT INTO HER...I HAVE NOTHING BUT REGRETS ABOUT THAT.

IMAGE SOURCE: SINCE I WAS IN THE CONDITION I DESCRIBED ABOVE, THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NONE AT ALL. IF I HAD TO SAY SOMETHING, IT'D BE QUENTIN'S YOUNGER SISTER (AND YOUNGER BROTHER) FROM *OCTOBER SKY*.

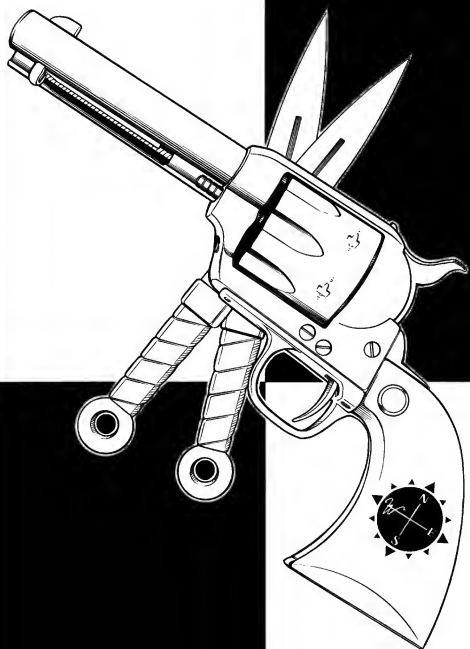
CHARACTER FILE #06



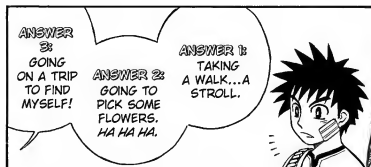
CAROL JOHNSTON

DESIGN: AS I STATED ABOVE (*SNIP*). I TRIED MAKING HER IN THE IMAGE OF A TYPICAL COUNTRY GIRL WITH PIGTAILS. LOOKING AT HER CAREFULLY, YOU CAN SEE THE MARKS OF MY SEARCH FOR A NEW LOOK THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM THE YOUNG GIRL CHARACTERS I HAD ALREADY DONE. THEY ARE THE MARKS OF MY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING EVEN WHEN MY MIND AND BODY WERE IN SHAMBLES. YES.

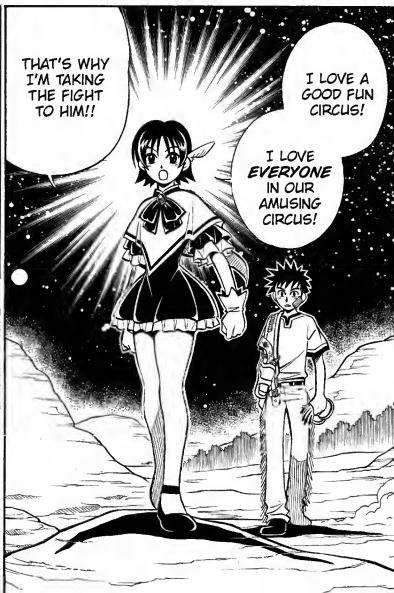
ON A SIDE NOTE, LOOKING CAREFULLY AT HER, CAROL'S CLOTHES ARE THE UNIFORM WORN BY THE WAITRESSES AT A COFFEE SHOP I ONCE FREQUENTED DURING MY YOUNGER DAYS, BUT WHICH HAS SINCE CLOSED DOWN. WHAT WAS I UNCONSCIOUSLY DRAWING?

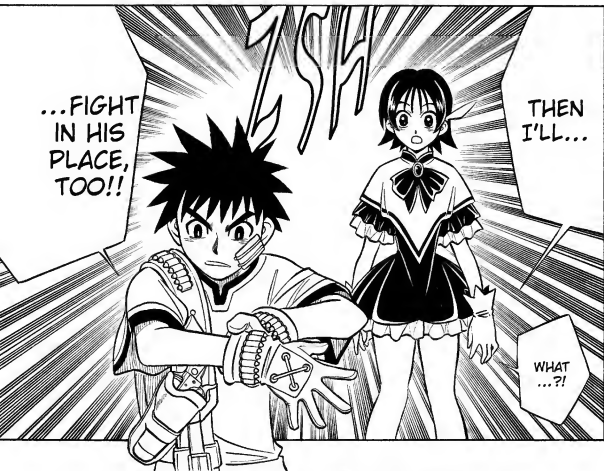


CHAPTER 15: 2 VS 2











JUST
KEEP
ON PUSHING
FORWARD!

IF THEY
REALLY
WANT
TO GET THERE,
THEY
SHOULDN'T PUT
ON BLINDERS.



YOU'RE
SO
NAÏVE.

...



WELL,
THAT'S
OKAY.
I'M
STUPID.

TMP

WHAT
...?!



YOU'RE
MEDDLING
WITH THE
PEOPLE
AROUND
YOU —

WITH OUR
AFFAIRS —
RIGHT
NOW.

OH.

YOU'RE
RIGHT
...



AND
SELF-
CONTRA-
DICTING.

WHAT?

YOUR
MEDDLING
ISN'T
REALLY
THE BAD
KIND.

...
OH
WELL.

WE'LL
CHASE AWAY
GUALARRIPA
AND
HIS BOYS
TOGETHER!

WOO HOO!

OKAY,
LET'S
DO IT!

HUH?!

HUH?
YOU'RE
THE ONE
PROVIDING
SUPPORT.

WHAT THE?!

HEY!
I CAN'T
LET YOU
SAY THAT!

AFTER ALL,
I AM
STRONGER
THAN YOU.

I'LL BE
COUNTING
ON YOUR
SUPPORT!

OKAY!



YOUR WEAPON
IS A KNIFE!
YOU'LL BE AT
A DISADVANTAGE
AGAINST
ENEMIES WITH
GUNS!!

AND BESIDES,
VIU, YOU STILL
CAN'T DO
CONCENTRATION
ONE.



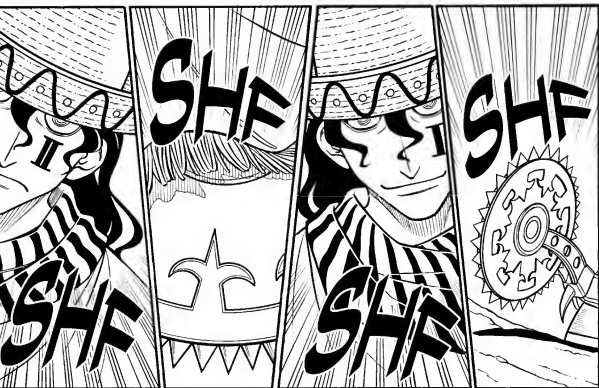
OH!
SOMETHING
WRONG
WITH
THAT?!

YOU'RE
NOT
SMART.

I'VE
IMPROVED!

AND
YOU'RE
A BAD
SHOT.







WHICH
MEANS
THAT ONE
EXTRA IS...



IT'S
YESTERDAY'S
TWINN PLUS
ONE EXTRA!



WHAT?

OR ELSE
I'LL SHOW
NO MERCY!

GO AWAY
FROM THE
CIRCUS
QUIETLY!



YOU
MUST BE
GUALARRIPA!







!!!!!!

FCH!!

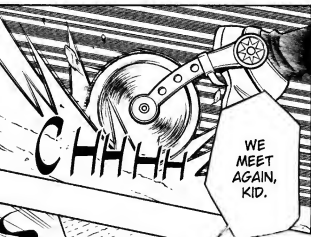


HERE
I GO!
GIVE ME
SUPPORT!



LIKE
I KEEP
SAYING,
YOU'RE
THE
SUPPORT
!!





WE
MEET
AGAIN,
KID.



BUT!

YOU DON'T
GET ANY
SECOND
CHANCES.
PREPARE
TO DIE!



STU

I'M NOT!
IF I'D HAVE
HAD BULLETS
IN MY GUN,
I COULD HAVE
TAKEN YOU!!



YEE!

WOOSH!







LINO LET DOWN HIS
GUARD AGAIN!
HE SHOULD PUT
HIMSELF IN MY
POSITION AS THE
GUY WHO HAS TO
CLEAN UP AFTER
HIM...

IF I GET *THIS*
CLOSE, THE
DIFFERENCE IN
OUR SHOOTING
SKILLS DOESN'T
MEAN A THING!

HERE
I COME!!

I DON'T AIM
FROM THE BACK
LIKE YOU DO.





CONCEPT: A CRAZY GUNMAN. FOR MY VILLAIN, I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE THE EASIEST TYPE TO DRAW—ONE THAT WOULD KEEP THE STORY MOVING CRISPLY WITHOUT CREATING A DETAILED BACK STORY—AND CAME UP WITH THE CONCEPT OF KEVIN.

KEVIN WAS ACTUALLY EASY TO DRAW, BUT HE WAS SO EASY TO DRAW THAT HE TURNED INTO QUITE A POOR CHARACTER WITH NOTHING BEHIND HIM.

I ATTEMPTED TO DEFINE HIM WITH THE SHOTGUN, BUT HE BECAME QUITE UNSPECTACULAR IN A MANNER THAT HAPPENS IN MANGA AIMED AT YOUNG MALES. IN ACTUALITY, A SHOTGUN HAS INCOMPARABLE DESTRUCTIVE POWER COMPARED TO A PISTOL, BUT AGAINST AN OPPONENT USING SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES ALL OVER THE PLACE, HE DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.

CHARACTER FILE #07



"TARGET" KEVIN

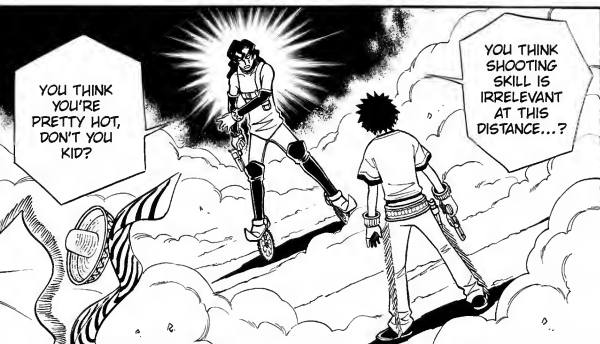
IMAGE SOURCE: THE CONCEPT WAS OF A CRAZY VILLAIN, SO IN THE COURSE OF PLAYING A GAME OF ASSOCIATION WHERE WE ASKED, "SHOULD HIS UPPER BODY BE BARE?", "SHOULD HE WEAR A JACKET OVER HIS BARE UPPER BODY?" HE TURNED OUT LIKE THIS.

DESIGN: TO THE PROCESS I DESCRIBED ABOVE, I ADDED THE "DESIRE TO DRAW SOMETHING STRANGE" THAT'S A PART OF MY NATURE TO COME UP WITH KEVIN'S DESIGN. THE MAIN POINTS ARE HIS HUGE TRIANGULAR EYES AND ELONGATED PUPILS.

THE TRUTH IS, I SORT OF LIKE THIS DESIGN. I THINK "HE'D BE A DESIGN WE COULD USE AS AN IDIOSYNCRATIC MAIN CHARACTER." NO, MAYBE NOT.

ON A SIDE NOTE, THE BULL'S-EYE ON HIS CHEST WAS A "SHOOT ME IF YOU CAN" WAY OF SHOWING OFF KEVIN'S CRAZINESS, BUT AT THE SUGGESTION OF MY EDITOR, IT BECAME THE START OF THE IDEA FOR THE TARGET BATTLE.

CHAPTER 16: VIOLENT ATTACK







CHAPTER 16: VIOLENT ATTACK



READY!!

ROOOO!!





HMPH...

CLIP-CLIP

DID YOU
THINK MY
SPUR
WAS JUST
AN ORDINARY
ROLLER?!

ARGH!

WHAM

COMBINED
WITH
MY KICK,
IT GOES
LIKE THIS!

IT HAS
A HARD
STEEL
EDGE
THAT CAN
EVEN CUT
THROUGH
ROCK!

WOOSH



...BE
READY
FOR
AN
INJURY
OR
TWO.

YOU'RE
GOING TO
BE OUR
HOSTAGE,
SO I WON'T
KILL YOU,
BUT...

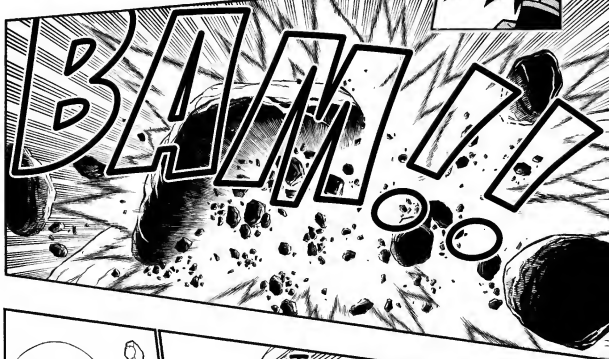
I WAS
ALMOST
FOOLED BY
APPEAR-
ANCES...

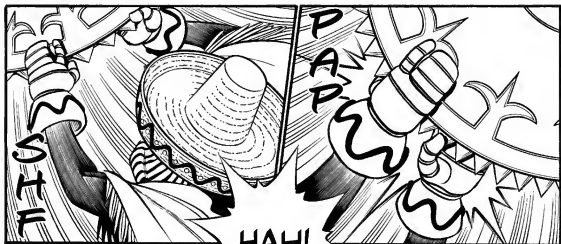
...BUT
YOU'RE
ACTUALLY
QUITE
SKILLED...

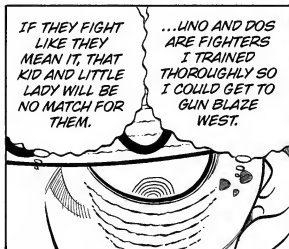
HA!!

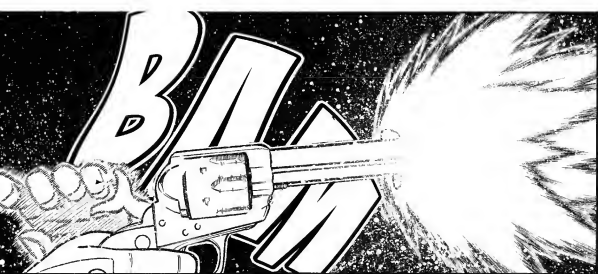
GIANT
CUTTER!

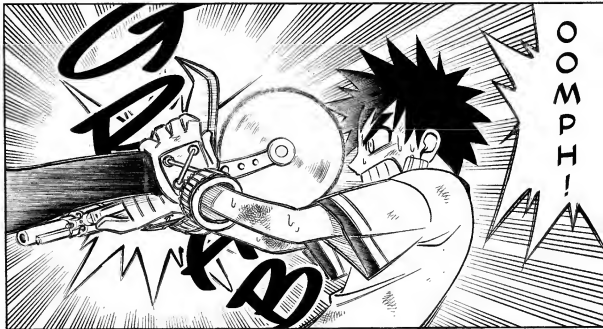
SH





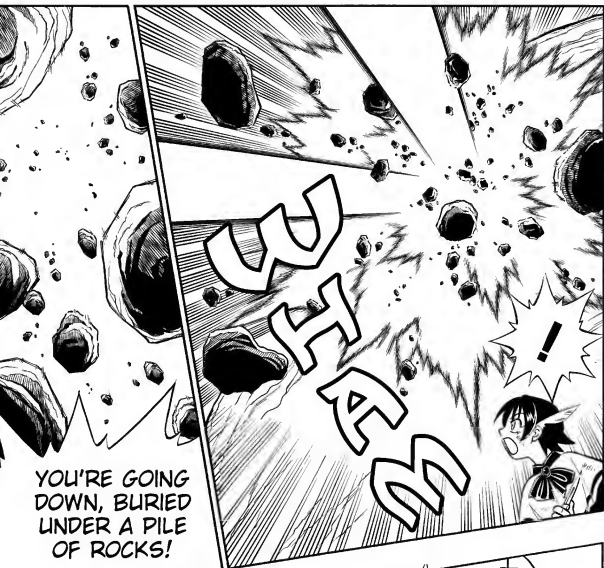
















...THAT
TIME
WHILE
YOU'RE
ATTACKING
IS YOUR
WEAK
POINT.



...YOU
CAN'T
THROW
YOUR
CUTTER
ANYMORE.

NOW...

HFF

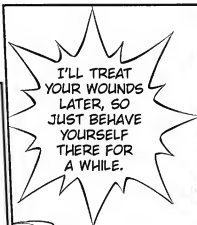
HFF



AARGH!



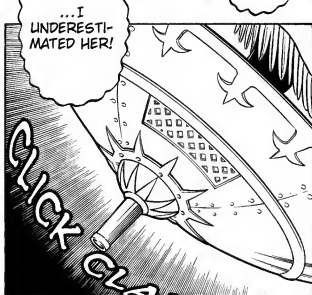
NNG...
GRR...



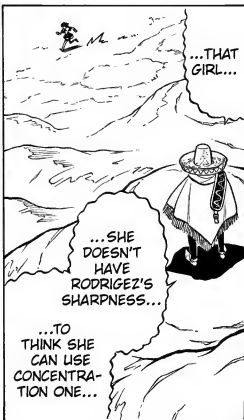
I'LL TREAT
YOUR WOUNDS
LATER, SO
JUST BEHAVE
YOURSELF
THERE FOR
A WHILE.



I
BELIEVE
...



...I
UNDERESTI-
MATED HER!

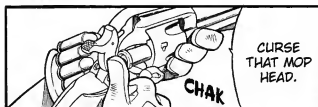


...THAT
GIRL...

...SHE
DOESN'T
HAVE
RODRIGEZ'S
SHARPNESS...

...TO
THINK SHE
CAN USE
CONCENTRA-
TION ONE...

READ
THIS
WAY



CONCEPT: COLICE IS MY "ABSOLUTE AND PERFECT BATTLE HEROINE" CREATED FROM REVIEWING MY PREVIOUS WORK, *RUIROUNI KENSHIN*, AND MY OWN WISHES.

IT SEEMS ALMOST AS IF THE CHARACTERS ONLY BEGAN MOVING WHEN COLICE APPEARED AND THE THREE WERE TOGETHER. THAT'S HOW MUCH I LIKE THIS CHARACTER.

COLICE IS THE STRONGEST OF THE THREE, DOESN'T WORRY MUCH, AND HAS A STRAIGHTFORWARD PERSONALITY. SHE POSSESSES THE VITALITY TO LIVE BY HERSELF IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND REALLY HAS NO SHORTCOMINGS, WHICH IS WHAT CAUSES HER TO TAKE ACTION, BUT SHE WAS A CHARACTER WHO WAS DIFFICULT TO WORK INTO THE DRAMA OF THE STORY. (OH, PERHAPS THAT'S HER SHORTCOMING, MAYBE?)

COLICE IS AN OLDER SISTER TYPE OF CHARACTER WHO SOMETIMES ACTS SILLY WITH VIU, OR SOMETIMES DISCUSSES THINGS WITH WILL. SHE OPENLY REFLECTS THE WATSUKI INFATUATION WITH OLDER PEOPLE THAT GOES AGAINST THE TRENDS IN SOCIETY. HEROINES SHOULD, AFTER ALL, BE FILLED WITH MY OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES!

NOT ONLY IS COLICE ONE OF THE FEW *GUN BLAZE WEST* CHARACTERS THAT I LIKE, SHE WAS RELATIVELY WELL DRAWN, AND I'D LIKE SOMEHOW TO REVIVE HER CHARACTER. ON AN UNRELATED NOTE, I'D LIKE TO TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE OF DOING A STORY BASED ON A BATTLE HEROINE ONE MORE TIME.

IMAGE SOURCE: NOTHING IN PARTICULAR. IF I HAD TO NAME SOMETHING, IT WAS A VERY SIMPLE THING THAT GOT ME STARTED: I LOOKED AT THE WORKS OF MY MANGA ARTIST FRIENDS, AND THOUGHT, "I'D LIKE TO DRAW SOMETHING LIKE THAT, TOO."

CHARACTER FILE #08



COLICE SATOH (SATO KORISU)

DESIGN: I DESIGNED COLICE BY TRYING MANY DIFFERENT THINGS. SINCE I HAD A VERY TOUGH TIME DRAWING THE HAIR OF THE HEROINES IN MY PREVIOUS WORK, *RUIROUNI KENSHIN*, I DECIDED AT THE START TO PART HER HAIR IN SECTIONS. LIKE WITH VIU, I WANTED TO SHOW HER EYEBROWS, SO I MADE HER HAIR IN FRONT HANG LOOSELY AND ADDED SOME NEEDED VOLUME AT THE SIDES. I DECIDED ON SEMI-LONG HAIR IN BACK WITH AN OUTWARD CURL TO BRING OUT A SENSE OF BUOYANCY. FOR HER EYES, I TRIED INCORPORATING THE CURRENT TREND, BUT I WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT IT SEEMED LIKE I DIDN'T PUT ENOUGH WORK INTO THEM. AS FOR HER COSTUME, AFTER READING *CARDCAPTOR SAKURA* BY CLAMP SENSEI, AND DESPITE THINKING IT WAS BEYOND MY ABILITIES, I THOUGHT, "GEE, I'D LIKE TO DRAW A FRILLY COSTUME LIKE THAT" AND DECIDED TO GIVE IT A TRY. I BASED THE COSTUME ON AN ORIGINAL DRESS A FASHION DESIGNER FRIEND PROUDLY SHOWED ME. ONE POINT THAT I MUST NOT FORGET TO MENTION IS COLICE'S THIGHS. I CAME TO THE SUDDEN REALIZATION OF THAT "EVERYONE WHO CAN DRAW YOUNG LADIES WELL, DRAWS THEM WITH LARGE THIGHS!" AND WORKED VERY HARD AT DRAWING HER THIGHS LARGE BY STUDYING STUDIO PHOTOS. (BUT I WONDER IF ANYONE EVEN NOTICED...?)

ALL THE SAME, DRAWING YOUNG LADIES IS FUN. I WANT TO APPLY MYSELF MUCH, MUCH MORE.

ON A SIDE NOTE, I HEARD A RUMOR THAT COLICE GREATLY RESEMBLES A CHARACTER THAT APPEARS IN THE ANIME *OJAJAMAO DOREMI* (DOREMI, THE BOTHERSOME WITCH). "THAT COULDN'T BE!" I THOUGHT, AND TOOK A LOOK. ...THEY DO LOOK ALIKE. BUT SINCE WHEN DID THE NUMBER OF BOTHERSOME WITCHES INCREASE TO FIVE? THE LAST TIME I LOOKED, THERE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ONLY THREE...

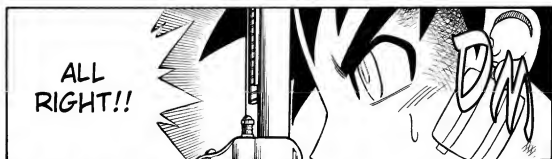
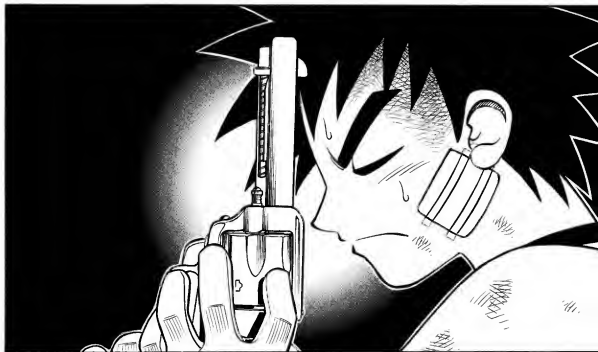
I WILL APPLY MYSELF MUCH, MUCH HARDER.

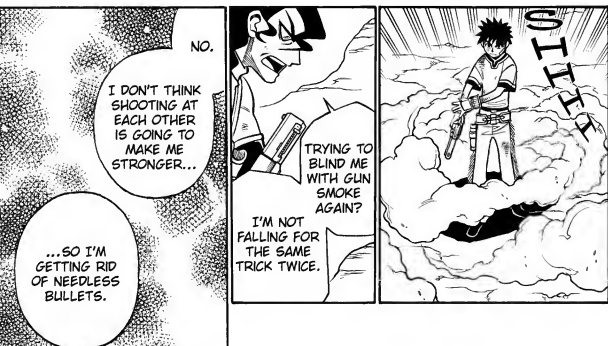


MUCH
STRONGER
THAN YOU
ARE NOW!!

BECOME
STRONGER,
VIL BANNES.
STRONGER THAN
YOU ARE NOW...

CHAPTER 17 : 1 UP







...WITH
THIS ONE
SHOT.

I'M GOING
TO BECOME
STRONGER...

DM!!



BAM

BAM



I
WILL...

... GET
STRONGER.



YOU'RE...

...WEAKER
THAN ME.



ARE YOU
MONKEYING
AROUND
WITH ME,
YOU
CRAPPY
KID?

IT'S
ABOUT
TIME YOU
REALIZE
WHERE
YOUR
SKILL
LEVEL IS.

...AND
SURPASS
YOUR
STRENGTH!

RIGHT
HERE
AND
NOW...

...I'M
GONNA
BEAT
YOU...

DASH

I'M PUTTING
IT ALL ON
THE LINE
RIGHT
NOW!!

THIS ONE
SHOT!
THIS ONE
ATTACK!



DIE!

TALK IS
CHEAP!

KERRANG!!



NNG!



TM

P



TAKE
THAT!!

B
A
M

B
A
M

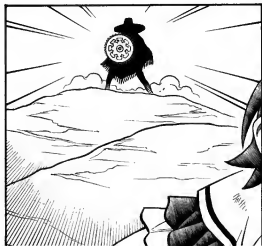


TMP
TMP
TMP

THAT
DIDN'T
HURT!!

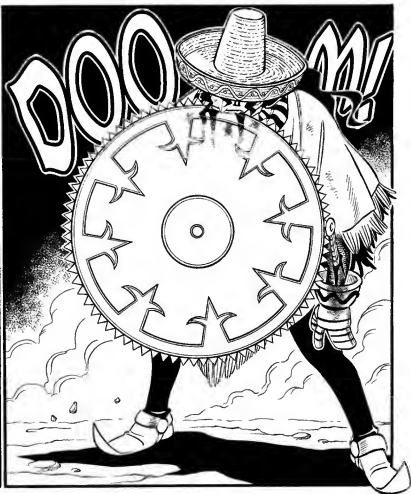
DANG.







SYNCH
THEM UP,
UNO.





VIU!

**OH
NO!**

**BYE-BYE,
CRUMMY
KID!**

**NOW
IT'S
"THE
END"!**

FSH

**BECOME
STRONGER, VIU
BANNES!
STRONGER
THAN YOU ARE
NOW...**

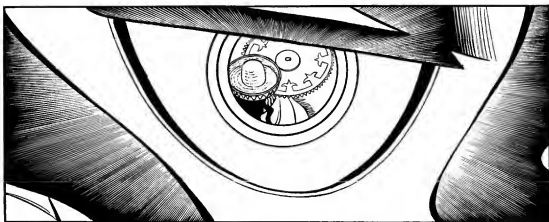


**MUCH
STRONGER
THAN YOU
ARE NOW!!**



**STRONGER
!!**





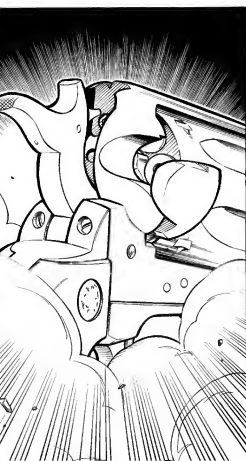
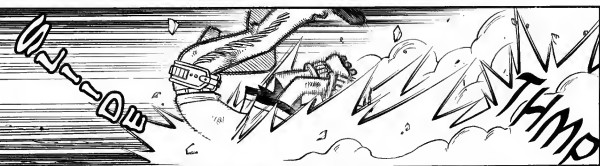
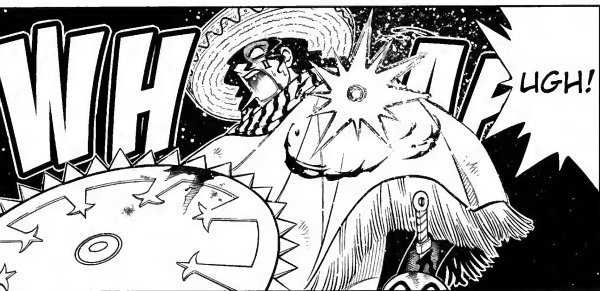


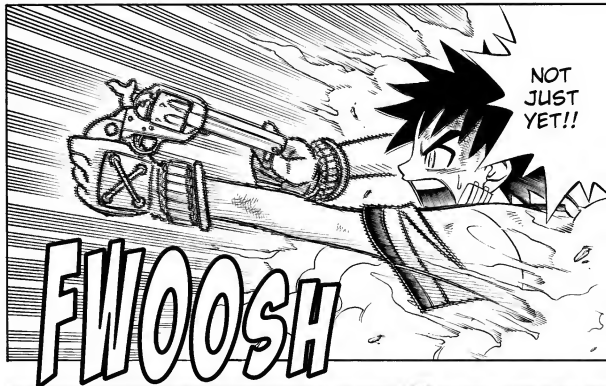
BAM



WARGH!







NOT
JUST
YET!!

FWOOSH



...CASE?!

THE
SPENT...

WHARGH!
IT'S
HOT!!

SSSSSSSS

!!
TAK

YEAH!!



H F F

W H E E Z E

H F F

W H E E Z E

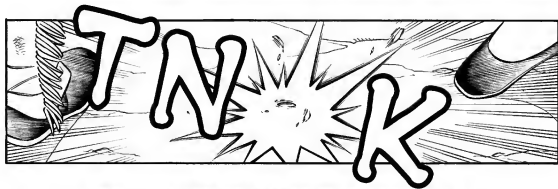
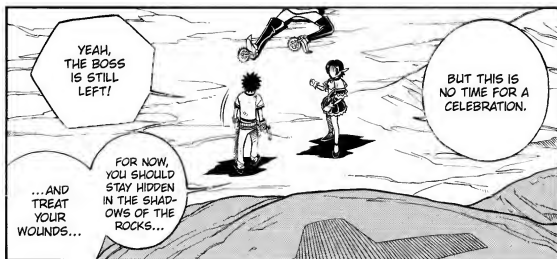
H F F

H F F

W H E E Z E

W H E E Z E





BUT I'M JUST
A BIT DIFFERENT
FROM LINO
AND DOS!

GRIN

GUALAR-
RIPA
...!

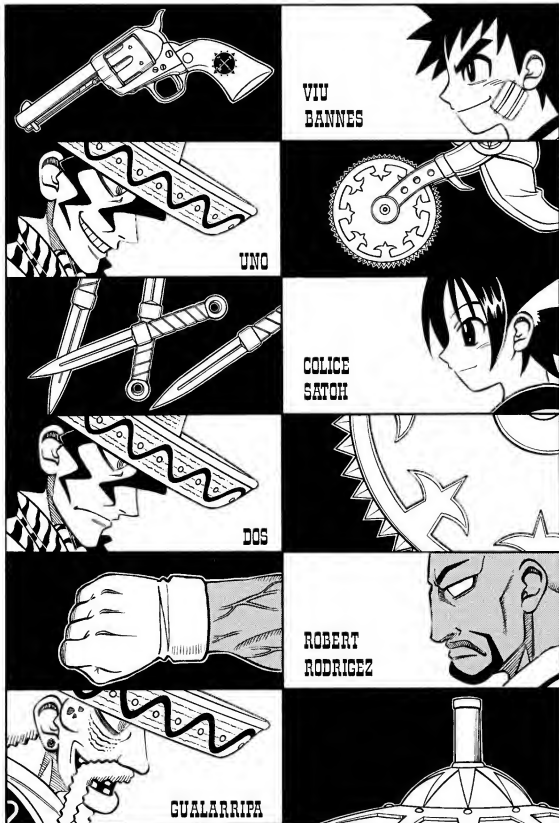
I MUST
SAY, YOU
TOTALLY
SURPRISED
ME.

I NEVER
IMAGINED THAT
NOT ONLY THE
GIRL, BUT YOU,
KID, COULD USE
CONCENTRATION
ONE...

DOOM

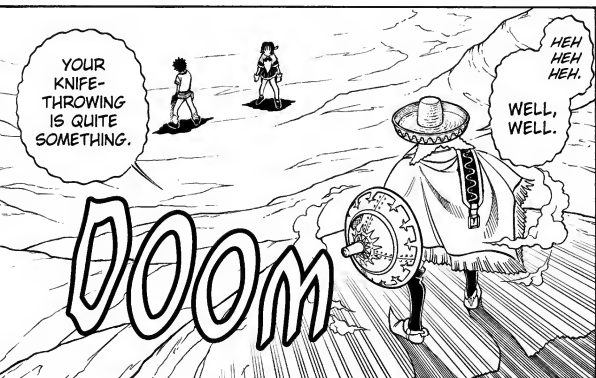
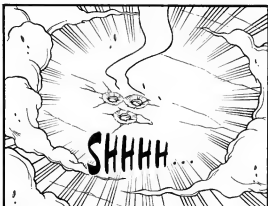
!!

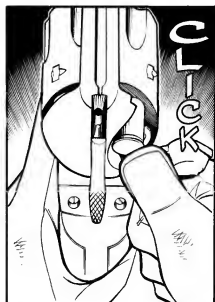
CHAPTER 18



MUCH MUCH STRONGER









DARN
RIGHT!



OH, SO
YOU STILL
INTEND TO
FIGHT
WITH
THOSE
INJURIES?



...THEN
DIE!

I SEE.
THEN FIGHT
TO YOUR
HEARTS
CONTENT...



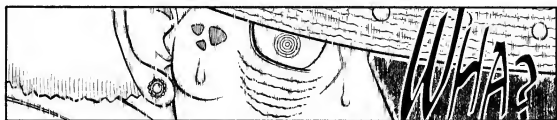
W-WAIT,
VIL!

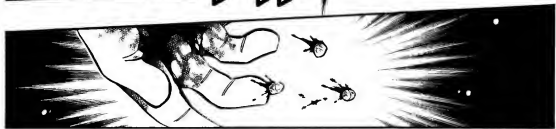


...WITH-
OUT
GETTING
TAKEN
DOWN!!

I
WON'T
GIVE
UP...









IZUKU-B-B-B...



RING-
MASTER
...



IF HE HITS ME
WITH A PUNCH
LIKE THAT,
I WON'T LAST
A SECOND!

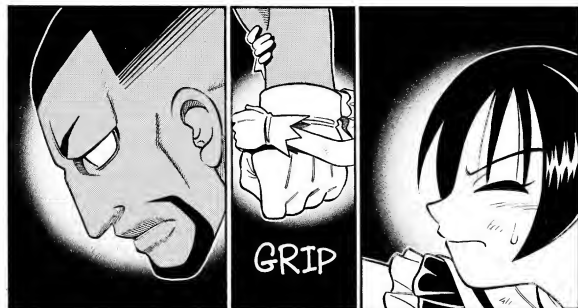
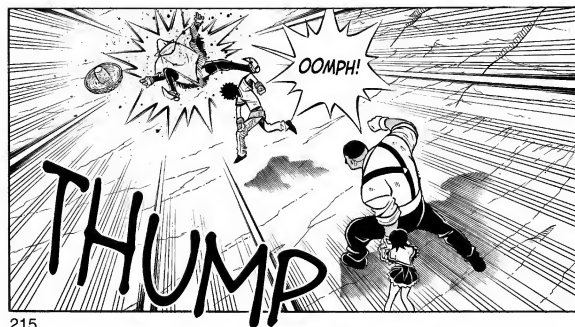


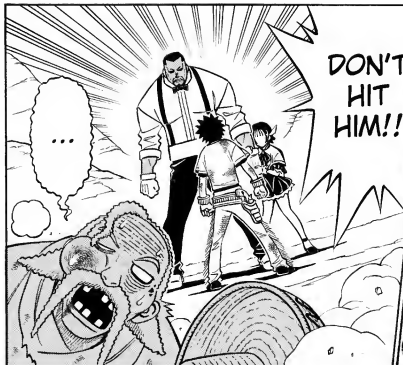
I'LL
BE
KILLED.

FWSH









DON'T
HIT
HIM!!



YOU'RE
NO LONGER
AN OUTLAW,
RIGHT?

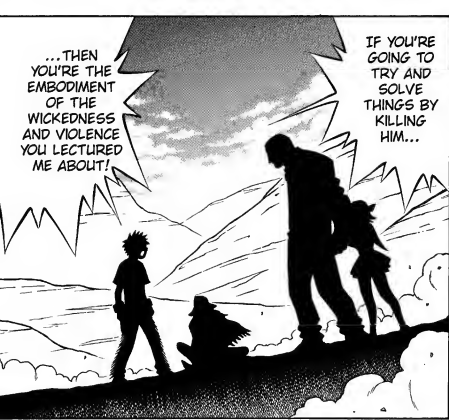
YOU
MUSTN'T
HIT HIM!



RIGHT
NOW,
YOU'RE
THE RING-
MASTER...



IF THAT'S
WHO YOU ARE,
THEN STOP
SAYING
THINGS LIKE...



...THEN
YOU'RE THE
EMBODIMENT
OF THE
WICKEDNESS
AND VIOLENCE
YOU LECTURED
ME ABOUT!

IF YOU'RE
GOING TO
TRY AND
SOLVE
THINGS BY
KILLING
HIM...



EVEN *THIS* GUY,
EVEN THOUGH HE'S
LIKE THIS, HE'S
SEEKING GUN
BLAZE WEST JUST
LIKE ME.



THAT'S
HOW I'M
GOING TO
SETTLE
IT!!

THE REAL
SOLUTION
IS...

...WHO GETS
TO GUN
BLAZE WEST
FIRST!!





IN OKLAHOMA

ROAR!

ARE YOU IN
A HURRY,
BARON?

WE'RE
RUNNING
A LITTLE
LATE.

TOOT!

BUTLER,
HOW IS
OUR
PROGRESS?

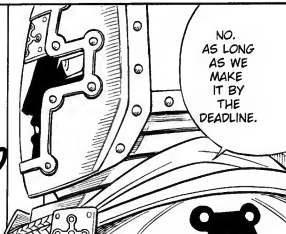


AFTER ALL,
RUSHING IS
FOR THE
PETTY...

...AND
NOT IN
MY NATURE.

BOOM

NO.
AS LONG
AS WE
MAKE
IT BY
THE
DEADLINE.



ROAR!

IN TENNESSEE

WEREN'T YOU
THE ONE WHO
SAID YOU
WANTED TO BE
ABSOLUTELY
THE FIRST ONE
THERE, J.J.?

DMM...

JUST
A LITTLE
FURTHER
TILL THE
POINT.

HEY, HANG
IN THERE,
LEADER.

WANTING
TO BE
THE
FIRST



